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REV. EDWARD R. GARESCHÉ, S.J.

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BY

REV. EDWARD F. GARESCHÈ, S. J.

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Dedication

TO OUR BLESSED LADY
SEAT OF WISDOM

PREFACE

THE present volume completes a series of Sodality books, which have been prepared to aid the Directors and officers of Sodalities and of sections of Sodalities, who wish to have at hand a somewhat comprehensive and practical series of instructions and suggestions bearing on their work. It is increasingly important that all who have to do with or are interested in Sodality organization should be furnished every aid to realize the distinctive character and advantages of this fruitful form of religious organization, so that they may make the most of the opportunities it offers to meet the needs of the present time.

In a previous volume, entitled *Social Organization in Parishes* (Sodality Organization), the present writer has set forth in some detail the various methods of organizing Sodalities, the different good works possible to Sodalists of various classes, and the means of obtaining success in Sodality work under varying circumstances in parishes, schools, colleges and hospitals.

Following this, another volume was published entitled *Sodality Conferences,* which took up and commented upon those rules of the Sodality which had a special bearing on the management of the Sodality and its functions, the method of erection and affiliation, the meetings, the officers, so that Directors might have ample material for their instructions on these points to their Sodalists, and for their own guidance

in the management of the Sodality. Many Directors and officers of Sodalities have kindly acknowledged the help they have thus received.

In the meantime another book, entitled *Children of Mary,* published some years ago, and which contained instructions on those rules which especially concern the personal devotion and activities of the Sodalists, had run through its first editions and as it had proven helpful to many Directors, who desired that it should be amplified and republished, we have decided to put it forth, with about as much again of matter for instructions to Sodalists, in an edition uniform with the two just mentioned. The present title, *"Sodality Conferences,"* is somewhat more accurate and descriptive than the one formerly used.

The previous chapters have therefore been revised, and enough new chapters added to make the volume twice as large as before. Most of the material here included deals with the spiritual aspects of Sodality life, and thus with these three books the Director and officers of Sodalities will be provided with ample material.

As each volume while forming part of a series, is meant to be reasonably complete in itself, and as every chapter seeks adequately to cover its subject, some repetition was desirable. It will be found, however, that each book supplements the others and deals with a particular phase of the rich and various activities of the Sodality.

Needless to say, the author has tried to profit not only by personal experience, but by the successes and failures of many other Directors of Sodalities, here and abroad. Having been entrusted with important preparations for the recent conference of Sodality Directors at Rome and been commissioned to visit many Sodalities in Europe, he has endeavored to

utilize the experiences and suggestions thus received, for the benefit of his readers.

In the hope that this book and the series of which it forms part may give some aid to our zealous Directors and Sodalists and thus offer some service and honor to the dear and bountiful Queen of the Sodality, we offer it and its companions to our many kind and devoted friends, both known and unknown.

Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin,
November 21, 1924.

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Sodality Conferences

CHAPTER I

A RELIGIOUS BODY

"THE Sodality of Our Lady, an association founded by the Society of Jesus and approved by the Holy See, is a religious body." (Rule 1.)

In the carefully considered rules which are drawn up under the guidance of the Holy See for the government of various religious societies, every word is fraught with meaning and suggestiveness. Thus one may take the rules of the Sodality phrase by phrase, and on each as a text hang profitable reflections. In the beginning of the first rule of the Sodality, quoted above, one comes, for instance, on the statement that the Sodality of Our Lady is "a religious body." How many of our Sodalists know the true significance of this phrase?

WAYS OF ASSOCIATION

There are several ways in which the faithful can associate together. They can meet in an informal way without any organization and encourage one another to prayer and good works. The members of such a little circle without any ecclesiastical approval or any regular organization can scarcely be called a religious body. They would be rather an informal club or a little private gathering. Again,

it is possible for certain devout members of the faithful to group themselves together in a permanent and organized way, to choose leaders, secure a spiritual director, and affiliate themselves to some existing religious body with definite traditions, fixed and approved rules, and privileges and indulgences conferred by the Holy See. It is in this second way that Sodalities are organized.

IN HONOR BOUND

Those who thus associate themselves to an already existing religious body are, of course, in honor bound to abide by its approved regulations and to carry out the principles and purposes to which they pledge themselves. Hence, it is befitting that every Sodalist, out of proper self-respect and out of due loyalty to the Sodality, should learn what this body is to which he or she is pledged, and what is required of individual Sodalists in order to live up to the standards of the Sodality.

A CANONICAL CONFRATERNITY

The Sodality has very fixed and definite rules and traditions and an authoritative place in the life of the Church, conferred on it by the Holy See. It is called in the official documents *congregatio,* and sometimes *confraternitas,* a technical word which indicates that the Sodality is canonically erected—that is to say, is officially and authoritatively established by the power of the Holy See communicated to the bishops and to the General of the Society of Jesus. In the words of *The Sodality of Our Lady, Studied in the Documents,* the Sodality is truly a confraternity, "that is to say, a body composed of the faithful—especially of those who are not members

of a Religious Order or Congregation—canonically erected, governed by a competent ecclesiastical superior, and aiming at fostering Catholic life by the exercise of certain special work connected with the divine worship, or of charity to the neighbor."

IN A BROAD SENSE

This word confraternity is, however, applied to the Sodality in the broad rather than in the strict sense of the term, because, though the Sodality meets for exercises in common, like a confraternity strictly so called, and the Sodalists sometimes bear some external mark of their being Sodalists, such as a medal or ribbon, still the Sodality is distinguished from a confraternity strictly so called "by its members having no particular dress, by the private character of its functions, by the less stringent bond of its members among themselves, and by its greater freedom of action and expansion."

Members of the Sodality should therefore remember that in joining the Sodality they have joined an approved and definite religious body, so holy in its influence and so elevating in its rules and traditions that St. Francis de Sales did not hesitate to call it a Religious Order for the laity.

THE CHIEF SODALITY

The rule goes on to tell that the Sodality of Our Lady was "founded by the Society of Jesus." There had, of course, been many societies extant in honor of the Blessed Virgin before the first Sodality of the Jesuit College in Rome was begun by the zealous professor, John Leunis, S.J. But it is this Sodality and those affiliated with it throughout the

world which have perhaps done most to promote organized effort in Sodality organization in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Jesuit missionaries, going forth to all parts of the world, carried with them this society in honor of the Mother of God, and in Jesuit colleges and churches the Sodality first flourished. But though the Society of Jesus founded the Sodality, as it is most commonly known today, the spread and progress of this holy association is the result of the united efforts of countless pastors, directors, and members of the laity during the last three and one-half centuries.

ITS WIDESPREAD MEMBERSHIP

So widespread is the Sodality and so universal is its membership that a very great proportion of devoted Catholics of both sexes have at some time or other joined this religious body. Many of them enter the Sodality at school, and, according to the maxim "Once a Sodalist, always a Sodalist," they continue to be members of this holy association until the end of their lives. The influence of the Sodality abides with them, and even though they may by one circumstance or another be kept from attending the meetings, they may still participate in the privileges and indulgences of the Sodality, provided, according to the rules, they affiliate themselves where possible to the local Sodality within a year after moving to a new home where the Sodality exists.

FOR EVERY AGE AND STATION

Among the Sodalists one finds persons of both sexes and of every age and station. As the late Pope Benedict XV remarked at the celebration of

the fortieth anniversary of his own entrance into the Sodality, "There are throughout the world Sodalities for priests as well as for the laity, for men and for women, for the professional classes as well as for the simple and poor." There are Sodalities for physicians, for lawyers, for nurses; Sodalities for laboring men and for apprentices; in a word, no age or class of either sex is excluded from membership in this society, providing only that they will fulfill the one condition of admission—namely, a willingness and endeavor to follow the rules of the Sodality, to cherish its spirit and practice its characteristic good works. Here in the United States every stage of life, every grade of honest occupation is represented in our many Sodalities. One finds, in going over this vast country, Sodalities everywhere—in the primary schools, in the high schools, in colleges and academies for both sexes, in the great parishes of our cities, and in the quiet country districts.

This religious body is one of the most widespread of all associations for the laity in honor of the Blessed Virgin, one of the most varied in its membership and glorious in its traditions. In joining the Sodality one becomes affiliated with seven millions of zealous Sodalists throughout the world, who have grouped themselves into over forty thousand Sodalities. Throughout the New World and the Old, one finds the Sodality. In Europe also, Sodalities are still springing up. New ones are being formed constantly, and we may be sure that many of the older ones are increasing in earnestness and piety. Wherever the Church goes the Sodality follows, inculcating devotion to the Blessed Mother and fostering good works in her honor.

ADAPTED TO THE NEEDS OF ALL

It is singularly adapted, this religious body, to the needs of all men. To the simple and poor it gives the easily understood instructions in fervor and virtue which are suited to their capacity. It inculcates practices within the reach of all—devotion to the Blessed Mother; filial confidence and affection toward her, and through her to her divine Son; faithfulness in attending meetings and engaging in good works. Hence the Sodality is an admirable and providential training school for our Catholic children, teaching them what they can best understand and most need, devotion to the Blessed Mother, faithfulness in their religious duties, and activity in the work of the lay apostolate. If they learn these things through the Sodality in their tender years, they will come out of school trained in the service of the Church as well as in literature and the sciences.

A SUPERNATURAL BOND

But the vast scope of the Sodality, its splendid traditions, the simple and practical organization that its rules suggest, make it the ideal bond of supernatural association, not only for children and for the poor and simple, but for the most eminent and most influential of our Catholic people. Devotion to the Mother of God and active zeal in her honor for personal holiness, the help of the neighbor, and the defense of the Church, this is a simple formula of perfection for even the most highly cultured and prominent in station amongst us. For them too, therefore, the Sodality is a providential means of unity and fervor. They may have Sodalities of their own sort, for our Holy Father the Pope has recommended Sodalities for various classes to meet their

special needs, and all these Sodalities will be bound together in the supernatural brotherhood of this great religious body, which will bring them all into one great family at the feet of the Mother of God.

A HOLY CHIVALRY

What an immense privilege it is to be a member of this holy chivalry, this militia of the Blessed Mother of God, this great religious body numbering among its members so many millions of the most glorious Catholics of the past who have now gone to join their Blessed Mother in heaven, and some seven million faithful and devout souls still on earth! *Noblesse oblige*—Nobility imposes obligations. If we delight in participating in the vast merits, the special privileges, and rich indulgences of the Sodality, we should also be most eager to make ourselves worthy of membership in this great religious body We should make it a point of honor to take our part in the threefold work of the Sodality in honor of the Queen.

Clearly, then, every Sodalist should study the rules with care and strive to bear out in every detail of life the traditions and ideals of personal holiness, of zeal for the help of the neighbor, and of effort for the defense and spread of the Church, which are the soul of this religious body founded for God's greater glory and dedicated to the Mother of God.

CHAPTER II

AN ARDENT REVERENCE

"THE Sodality . . . aims at fostering in its members an ardent reverence toward the Blessed Virgin Mary." (Rule 1.)

An ardent reverence toward the Blessed Mother of God.

One word sometimes contains a whole volume of thought, suggestion and devotion. A single phrase may sum up an entire treatise of holy and profitable meditation, and may give the reader matter for reflection for many fruitful hours. It is so with this passage of the rules of the Sodality, which requires that it should aim to stir up in the hearts of its members an ardent reverence toward the Blessed Virgin.

THE PASSING OF REVERENCE

Reverence, one must own with sadness, is growing rarer in the world. It is a thoughtful attitude of mind, and thoughtfulness is getting more uncommon. It implies submission, lowliness, a confession of our own inferiority, and these things ill agree with the self-sufficient and self-assertive spirit of the times. Yet, to be reverent toward holy things is a precious quality of all complete characters and well-balanced minds. To lack it is an odious defect, which a judicious man or woman should be heartily ashamed of. It is the way of our age to question everything, to discuss

everything, to make free even with the holiest things. The infection of irreverence is in the air, and we should therefore be the more solicitous to counteract it by cultivating, in thought and deed, the Christian virtue of reverence.

THE STANDARD OF REVERENCE

In proportion as created things approach nearer to God, we owe them more reverence. Even inanimate things partake of the holiness of the Most High when they are connected intimately with His service. The more closely they come to Him, the more they are objects of our reverence. We revere the church above all buildings, the sacred vestments more than the church, the chalice more than the sacred vestments. So also in regard to persons, those who bear more of the authority and dignity of God's service and who thus come nearer to Him, deserve and obtain the greater reverence. The priest is honored above other men because he bears the power of Christ to minister to souls. The bishop is more honored than the priest because he comes nearer in his office to his Master. The Pope is honored above all other bishops because he is the nearest in dignity to Christ Himself.

Now, since this is the standard of reverence, whom should we reverence more than the Most Blessed Virgin, to whom it is given to be nearer than all other creatures to the Word made Flesh? In dignity, in honor, in reverence, she is the pinnacle of mere creation. Above the hierarchies of priestly dignity, above the exalted choirs of the saints, above all patriarchs and prophets, all apostles and disciples, all confessors and virgins, all martyrs, even above the very choirs of celestial spirits who stand around the throne of God, this most humble and most pure Virgin is exalted to such a pinnacle of reverence and honor

that she had need to be the most humble of God's creatures so that she might bear the height to which His condescension had vouchsafed to elevate a mere creature. For she stands far, far beyond the perilous height that turned the head of Lucifer and of his angels and sent them hurtling down to hell.

THE HONOR DUE TO MARY

To realize what reverence is due to the Virgin Mary, we need only contemplate the most tender and touching scene in all the history of the world. Look upon the Child in the arms of His Mother! That simple scene, whose like is so familiar in the simple history of our human kind, is in itself a compendium of the amazing condescension of God in laying aside the splendors of His Godhead to become a little child, and of the astounding heights to which He has elevated that single and chosen Virgin whom He decreed should be His Mother. Through custom we have become dulled, perhaps, to the full significance of the scene. We shall do well to ponder upon it, so as to refresh our gratitude toward God and our reverence toward this Virgin Mother.

THE CREATURE NEAREST TO GOD

There is no one so near by nature to a man as his own natural mother. He is literally flesh of her flesh, and bone of her bone. From her he takes being, nourishment, the tender and intimate cares of infancy, the earliest training, the most necessary and constant care during childhood. To no one does he owe so great a debt of nature, training, influence; to no one else is more honor justly due for his qualities and achievements than to his mother. Now, these things are all true of the Mother of God, and they are more

true of her than of ordinary mothers. All His connection with human nature was through her. His brotherhood with our human kind is solely through His Mother, Mary.

Think to whom it is that this most holy Virgin is bound by ties more near than those which join any other human creatures together. He who is her Son is also, in the plain and literal meaning of the words, God Himself, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, co-equal and one with the Father and the Holy Ghost in all eternity. The thought staggers our comprehension. The mystery of God's condescension exceeds, from its vastness, all our powers of gratitude or even of realization. We are left gasping with wonder at the splendor of the truth that the eternal God is truly and literally the Son of this Woman, who therefore exceeds in dignity and honor all the rest of mere creation more than the brightness of the noonday sun exceeds that of the stars.

Here is the reason of the rule that bids us foster in our hearts an ardent reverence toward the Mother of God. Those without the Church who criticise the reverence which Catholics pay to the Mother of God either must be incredulous of the fact that she is truly God's Mother or else they must refuse to use their natural reason. She who is truly Mother of God must have a right to whatever reverence all the rest of the human race can pay her, for she is nearest to the infinite God.

ITS OUTWARD MANIFESTATION

But such a reference as the rule requires will not be confined to our own hearts alone; it will show itself in the zeal we have to honor in every practical way this most beloved Woman. Reverence is a virtue of the heart, but when it is genuine and deep it shows

itself irresistibly in outward actions. Our faithfulness to our ordinary duties and devotions as Sodalists is an excellent test of our reverence for the Blessed Mother. Devotion to her is the characteristic virtue of all who truly deserve the glorious title of Sodalist of the Blessed Virgin; and by a careful fidelity to the exercises and rules of the Sodality we reverence her in a very active and practical way. It sometimes grows irksome to members of the Sodality to attend the meetings, to say the prayers recommended, to take part in the work of the sections. When this happens and they are tempted to leave off the work of the Sodality from weariness, they should call to mind what is the motive of all these efforts and observances, for whose love and reverence they are intended, and whom they are meant to please and honor, and the thought will give them new interest in their work. Every act of the Sodalist is an act of reverence and devotion toward God's holy Mother. In every effort we make to be faithful to the rules, to give edification in the Sodality, to draw others to its ranks, we honor and reverence her, who, of all creatures, is nearest to the Most High.

Thus every picture, every memory of the Mother and the Child should awake in our hearts a new reverence, a fresh and unfailing devotion toward her whom we see in the glory of her motherhood, holding in her arms the Son of God, who has chosen to become the Son of Mary. The glory and wonder of the mystery of the Incarnation is made visible in this most meaning sight of the Mother and the Son. Her arms support the Word made Flesh, her bosom is His refuge, her strength sustains Him, her care cherishes His tender life. As a human child He needs the care of a mother, and that mother is Mary. His tiny fingers cling to hers. His eyes are upon her with such love and

approval as no other son was ever able to give to any other mother. He is at peace in the refuge of her arms; they are the only home He has on earth.

THE TRUE SPIRIT OF THE SODALITY

By dwelling on such thoughts and striving to stir ourselves to that degree of self-forgetful devotion to our Blessed Mother which is their logical fruit, we shall best prepare ourselves to understand the rules and to drink in from them the true spirit of the Sodality, which is the reverence and service of the Blessed Mother for the sake of her divine and adorable Son. The more we honor the Mother, the more we shall please the Son, Our Lord, the better we shall commemorate the mystery of His Incarnation, celebrate the bounty and the mercy of God, render thanks for our redemption, and prepare ourselves to receive in great measure the graces that God gives so freely through the hands of His Mother. But to those that understand and love no reason is required, no argument necessary to make them reverence the Virgin Mary. They have only to look at the Mother and the Child, remember who it is that this elect Virgin holds in her arms and nurses as her own, and their hearts will overflow with reverence and love. An ardent reverence toward the Virgin Mary is at the very heart of our Catholic Faith.

CHAPTER III

A FILIAL DEVOTION

"THE Sodality of Our Lady . . . aims at fostering in its members . . . a filial love toward the Blessed Virgin Mary." (Rule 1.)

One of the most touching of all the phrases of the rules is that which recommends to the Sodalists to have toward their Queen and Mother "a filial devotion." It describes, in one happy expression, the whole attitude of mind and will which the loyal member of the Sodality should ever bear toward his heavenly Patroness, and it sums up all the service which we owe to Mary. By fixing this phrase in our hearts, we shall become true and constant in the service of our Queen.

THE MEANING OF FILIAL DEVOTION

For, a filial devotion is that which a generous, loving, dutiful child has for its mother. In the word is summed up a fervor of love, a sincerity of reverence, a willingness of service, and a capacity for self-sacrifice that make up the ideal character of a Sodalist of the Blessed Virgin. Consider the lovely meaning of both the words that go to make up this happy phrase. Devotion has a significance entirely beautiful and sincere. There are other words in our language which, though tender and holy in their true significance, have yet been sometimes twisted and dis-

torted out of their right meaning, to describe sinister and unlovely things. Such, for instance, is the word "love," which, of right, expresses the highest and purest of the heart's great emotions, but which has been misused until in many minds it stands for passion and license. But there is nothing in the meaning of this word "devotion" but what is high, self-sacrificing and noble. To devote oneself to a beloved object means to be willing to take pains in service, to sacrifice one's own selfish cares and interests, and to give generously whatever is asked of us, for the sake of the one whom we love. The very word connotes a giving. It is offering ourselves and not seeking. It is planning for others and not for self. It is giving over what we have, for the sake of the one whom we love, and not calculating upon a return of our generosity. In a word, it epitomizes the attitude we should have to her who, after our Lord Himself, has the greatest of all claims on our self-sacrifice and generosity of service.

AN UNDEVOTED SERVICE

Oh, what a great pity it is that so many, even among the Sodalists of the Blessed Virgin, have so little appreciation of the unselfish devotion that they owe to that most tender and appreciative Mother! Their service is cold, occasional, and calculating. They give as little as they can and get as much as is possible. If any obstacle or difficulty arises in their service of the Blessed Mother, they find an excuse to neglect her interests and take their own ease and pleasure instead. If it is inconvenient to attend a meeting or to perform the work they have been assigned or have volunteered to do in her honor, they straightway find some pretext to avoid the uncomfortable service. They do what they like

and when it pleases them, and then, when the hard duties come wherein they could show their true and unselfish devotion, they shirk and fail, and thus give evidence that their love for their Mother lacks the salt of sacrifice.

After all, is it much that the Sodality asks in return for all that our Mother has done for each one of us? Her devotion to each of us in particular was proved of old by her offering up of her Divine Son for our salvation, and it is witnessed every day by her constant intercession for us and by the stream of favors that fall from her most motherly hands upon our souls. Who is it that stood under the Cross, in the greatest agony of spirit, and saw the sacred Body that she had borne and nourished at her virginal breast torn and ruined for our mean and miserable sins? Who was it that drank so deeply with Him from the chalice of agony of soul at our offenses that, though no torturer's hand ever assailed her most pure flesh, yet she deserves in very truth to be called the Queen of Martyrs? While her Son died in body for our sins, she died with Him a far bitterer death than any death of her own body could have been, because she loved Him so much better than herself that His tortures were a greater agony for her than any conceivable sufferings of her own!

MARY'S DEVOTION TO OURSELVES

How immense and pure and generous and unbounded is the devotion of that dear Mother toward ourselves! Her love for each of us is as special and tender as though she had not a world-wide family of needy and desolate children besides. The immense goodness of her great heart, which God has made to mother all mankind, enables her to be devoted to each

of us in particular with an excess of love and care that other mothers cannot find in their hearts for even a single child. We, even we, are each so utterly the object of her tenderness, that she loves us, thinks of and cares for us as though there were no one else in the world on whom to lavish the boundless tenderness of her heart. Touched by her vast, selfless, unsleeping, and weariless devotion, how we should strive and pray to lift up to our Mother in return all the devotion which is within the power of our hearts!

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WORD "FILIAL"

Then the word "filial" in the rule—what a wealth of eager affection, alacrity of service, and flaming desire of self-sacrifice it should stir up in our souls! To be the true child of such a Mother! To have the privilege of being devoted to her, not only as a servant, which would be honor enough in itself and far beyond our deserts, but also as a son or a daughter, owned and loved by her as one of her intimate family of the Sodality! It is an unspeakable privilege and joy to come closer in whatever way to this chaste shrine of the Godhead, to this chosen flower of God's predilection, to this heavenly Maiden beloved by the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, to whom, by special and eternal choice, she is Daughter, Mother and Spouse.

It is wise to unite ourselves, in whatever way we can, most intimately to the name and the service of Mary. We should be consecrated to her from the days of our infancy, seek her intercession in every need, offer up by her hands all our merits and our prayers to God, and all our cries for help and pardon. But how supremely wise and prudent to join ourselves in deed and in spirit to the number of her special children who, with the approval

of the Church, pledge to her a filial devotion, and bind themselves to strive all their days to be worthy in thought and act of being called the sons and daughters of Mary!

DEEDS THE TEST OF DEVOTION

Finally, we should remember that love and devotion are to be shown both in words and in acts, but that our acts of service and sacrifice are a most sure test of our love and incomparably more precious than words. Therefore we should take care to offer up to our Blessed Mother often, and if possible every day, some special acts of personal piety, helpfulness to others, and zeal for the Faith. The work of our Sodality will be at once our reminder and our opportunity.

A PRAYER FOR FILIAL DEVOTION

Most loved and most loving Mother, to whom the Sacred Heart of Jesus pays with perpetual joy the most filial and perfect devotion, through thy love for that adorable Heart, and through thy desire to have me resemble thy divine Son, I beg of thee to obtain for me from Him the gift of a filial devotion like to that of His own most holy Heart toward thee. For this distinction I sigh and plead, most holy Mother, that I may excel in the filial love of thee. Make my heart most tender to respond to every appeal of thy service; make it generous and self-sacrificing to do and to suffer all things in thy service. Obtain for me a burning zeal to do whatever offers itself in thy honor, an enlightened intelligence to perceive the opportunities for honoring and serving thee in the persons of thy children, and

an unwearying industry and perseverance in doing whatever my hands find to do, for the honor and the love of thee. Through thy hands I place in the hands of thy Divine Son my soul, my heart, and my life. Amen.

CHAPTER IV

THE THREEFOLD PURPOSE

"THROUGH this devotion and with the protection of so good a Mother, it seeks to make the faithful gathered together under her name good Catholics, sincerely bent on sanctifying themselves, each in his state of life, and zealous, as far as their condition in life permits, to save and sanctify their neighbor and to defend the Church of Jesus Christ against the attacks of the wicked." (Rule 1.)

THREE GREAT SPHERES OF EFFORT

In this paragraph of the rule we have a delightful panorama of the work of Sodalists. Their devotion to the Blessed Virgin and their confidence in the help and protection of their holy Mother are to send them forth like crusaders of old, filled with courage and inspired with zeal, to the threefold field of the lay apostolate, so succinctly yet so clearly set before them by the provisions of this truly golden passage in the rules. They are, first of all, to become good Catholics themselves, sincerely bent on sanctifying themselves in that state of life to which God has called them, imitating the virtues of His holy Mother, who is the mirror of the perfection of her divine Son. They are to be zealous to save and sanctify the souls of others, so far as their condition in life permits, and they are courageously to defend the Church of Christ

against its enemies and to labor to spread it far and wide among men.

Personal holiness, then, the help of the neighbor, and the defense of the Church, in honor of the Blessed Mother and with her protection and assistance, are the three great spheres of Sodality activity. Clearly, these three departments of effort cover in a comprehensive way the whole scope of the lay apostolate. Whatever a Catholic man and woman can do for God, the neighbor and the Church, is included in the spirit of this rule, and so the Sodality is, in a very marvelous way, a compendium of perfection in the world and the encourager and inspirer of every sort of goodness.

AN AUTHENTIC SODALITY PROGRAM

We have in this rule the authentic program of Sodality effort. Whoever would be a good Sodalist and completely faithful to the duties of his membership must give a fair and considerate attention to each of these three departments of endeavor. To slur over any one of them and neglect to cultivate the field it offers is to miss just so much of one's high opportunity as a Sodalist and to fall just so much short of doing all one should for the honor of the Queen of the Sodality. But as Catholics sometimes lay great stress on one part of their duty and neglect some equally important phase of it, attending perhaps to personal piety, but neglecting the charity they owe their neighbor, or busying themselves with exterior good works and not giving enough time and attention to prayer and interior devotion, so also one sees Sodalists and whole Sodalities intent on observing one part of their duty toward their Queen and Mother and woefully neglecting some other aspect of it which it is really just as important for them to attend to.

It were well, therefore, if Directors of Sodalities, prefects and other officers, and the Sodalists themselves, would take for their watchword and battle-cry this simple sentence, in which are epitomized the three wide domains of Sodality action: "To work for personal holiness, for the help of their neighbor and the defense of the Church, in honor of the Blessed Virgin." This sentence, well explained and thoroughly understood, will serve to keep before the minds of Sodalists their duty and their opportunity, and will safeguard them from laying such undue stress on any one department of Sodality action as to neglect and miss the others.

PERSONAL HOLINESS

The rule significantly remarks that each Sodalist should be bent on sanctifying himself in his own state of life. Personal holiness is the intimate union with Almighty God through sanctifying grace, a union which is strengthened by meritorious actions, intensified by each access of merit, safeguarded by self-denial, increased by the love of God, and fostered by prayer and good works. The perfection to which most Sodalists are called is the perfection of persons in the world, moving in the ordinary society of men, busy with their daily tasks, and exposed to the distractions, temptations and occasions of sin and of merit which are as common in the work-a-day world as is the dust of the streets or the smoke of the factory. For these Sodalists it is especially necessary to hold up the virtues of the Blessed Mother as the model of an every-day life of complete union with God, of pure intention and stainless innocence. The thought of the Blessed Mother immaculate going about her household cares through busy and laborious days, is a vivid, concrete,

intelligible lesson and encouragement to all those who are in the midst of a bustling, distracted, and perhaps sorely tempted life in the world. Our Sodalists, therefore, should make the Blessed Virgin so real to themselves, feel so perfect a confidence in her protection and have such a horror of thinking or saying or doing anything unworthy of a Child of Mary that they may live, so to speak, in her continual presence, and experience her help and encouragement as vividly and keenly as though they dwelt in her house at Nazareth and were under her bodily eyes all the day long.

BY THE HANDS OF MARY

Those who are called to lives of intimate and special service of God in the priesthood or in religion have no less need of this spirit of faithful friendship with and filial devotion to the Blessed Virgin. In the providence of God, the special graces and favors in the spiritual life come through the hands of Mary, and it is unheard of in the Church that anyone succeeded in becoming greatly united to God and deeply holy without at the same time being devotedly attached to the service of the Blessed Mother and making her his chief reliance and patron after her divine Son. Hence it is, that all Religious Orders and Congregations take her as their primal patron. Hence, also, many men and all women who enter religion add her name to theirs. It follows that Religious need the encouragement and devotion of the Sodality as well as the laity, and may profit also by this exhortation of the rule to sanctify themselves through devotion to and with the protection of so good a Mother, and thus to realize that high degree of the imitation of her virtues which their vocation requires.

THE SAFEGUARD OF THE SACERDOTAL VOCATION

These reflections apply with particular force to the priests of God, and explain why, in Europe particularly, many Sodalities have been formed composed entirely of priests. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin is the safeguard of the sacerdotal vocation. What priest but must acknowledge that his call from God to the holy work of the priesthood has come to him through the hands of God's Mother; what one but must confess, looking back over the years, that his correspondence with that great grace and his perseverance in the priestly calling are greatly due to her watchful care and motherly pleading in his behalf? So that all classes of the faithful, as our late Holy Father Benedict XV has told us, all ages and both sexes, the priests and the laity, will do well to join the Sodality and, having entered it, should labor to cultivate with their whole heart that personal holiness which its rules require in honor of our Queen and Mother.

THE SODALIST'S ZEAL FOR SOULS

Following close on personal sanctity and flowing from it as a stream from its spring, will come a zeal for souls which prompts good Sodalists to work, as far as their condition in life permits, to save and sanctify their neighbor. Throughout these talks on the rules, much is said concerning the exterior activities of Sodalists which cover comprehensively the entire field of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. All these good works, whether they partake of the character of social effort for the poor, the handicapped and the unfortunate, or of religious devotion

or of intellectual improvement; whether they have to do with visiting the sick or burying the dead, counseling the doubtful or comforting the sorrowful, and so of all other works of mercy, are motived by this one great desire and kept in action by this one great zeal—to secure the salvation and the sanctification of souls. This is the divinest of activities. It was to accomplish this work that the Son of Man Himself came down from heaven, took a human nature, a body and a soul, labored for a lifetime, taught and suffered and at last died upon the cross. No wonder, then, that the children of the Blessed Mother, who are in perfect harmony with her heart, itself in perfect concord with the Heart of her divine Son, should be eager to help Him in His sublime and mighty mission for the saving of souls. This is the reason of all Sodality activities for the neighbor. Sometimes the work aims directly at the sanctification of souls, as when the Sodality promotes devotion, fosters frequent communion, stirs up the zeal of its members to bring back fallen-away Catholics and to convert those without the Church; sometimes it is indirectly for the salvation of souls, as when the Sodality promotes innocent entertainment, fosters sociability among Catholic young people, organizes instructive lecture courses and circulates good books. But, direct or indirect, the motive is the same. It is the same motive which animated the heart of the Blessed Mother at all times and in every circumstance; whether she pleaded with her Son at the marriage feast at Cana to manifest His tender compassion and thus to draw the hearts of men to Himself by the chords of Adam or stood beneath the cross of that same well-beloved Son, praying with a heart full of anguish and compassion, for the salvation of all mankind.

THE DEFENSE AND SPREAD OF THE FAITH

The third great sphere of Sodality activity in honor of the Blessed Mother is the defense and spread of the Church, and this also is motived by the love of God and zeal for souls. The great visible means of salvation to all mankind, the channel through which the blood of Christ is applied with saving efficacy to the hearts of men, the society through which the sacraments are administered and the word of God is spoken to all mankind is the holy Catholic Church, one and holy, Catholic and apostolic. Those who have the immense blessing to belong to this divine society, founded by the Son of Man Himself, sealed and cemented with His blood and itself His mystical body whereof He is head in efficacy and power, should not be content with their own personal happiness in the gift of faith. They should bestir themselves to spread abroad the divine fire that has fallen into their own hearts and souls and to communicate to many others the blessings which God has given so freely to them. Of all human hearts that burned with apostolic fire and longed to spread abroad the universal blessings of the passion of Christ, none ever flamed with so great fervor, after the Heart of Christ Himself, as did the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Even the great apostle St. Paul, that fiery warrior of Christ, whose weariless journeys, untiring preachings, and dauntless sufferings and labors for the Gospel have left a trail of glory over the early Church, could not match in singleness of purpose, unwearied supplication and tireless effort and sacrifice the heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary. She is Queen of apostles, as she is of martyrs and confessors, of virgins and of all saints.

To imitate her worthily, then, to deserve to be

called a member of her Sodality we must burn with zeal for the spread and welfare of the Church. Those Sodalists who are not doing their part toward the spread of Catholic doctrine by helping the foreign missions, by spreading Catholic literature, by promoting conversions, by their conversation and good example, by contributing to work for the negroes and Indians and for the conversion of non-Catholics, are doing less than their duty as members of this great society in honor of the Mother of God. She will not be quite pleased with us if she sees us intent only on our personal welfare, forgetful of her lost children outside the fold and careless of the struggles and wounds of the Church of her divine Son. We must lead apostolic lives of prayer and effort to be worthy of membership in the blessed militia of the Queen of Heaven. We must exert ourselves for others and for the Church as well as for our own personal sanctification if we would entirely satisfy the loving heart of our tender Mother.

SODALITY CHIVALRY

Here, then, is the mighty scope, the vast crusade, the glorious chivalry, the appealing warfare of the Sodality in honor of the Mother of God. To be holy ourselves and to become more and more holy with her help and through the efficacy of her example; to be a source of blessing and salvation to others through the personal edification we give and through our unweary efforts, according to our opportunity and condition of life, in the unending variety of chances for well-doing which the spiritual and corporal works of mercy offer us; to defend and spread the Church in whatever effective way comes to our hands or is suggested to us by our Sodality Directors and officers—it was for this that we joined the Sodality, and it is to this we are

called by the clear trumpet peal of this inspiring rule. When you assemble, then, with your fellow Sodalists, to offer up prayers in honor of the holy Mother, when you look at her statue with longing, perhaps through a mist of tears, pleading with her for some favor for yourself or yours, when you take in hand the manual of the rules or kneel down in the dim church to pray to the Blessed Mother and ask her intercession, call to mind the watchword of the Sodality, the compendium of its activities: "To work in honor of the Blessed Mother for personal holiness, the help of the neighbor, and the defense of the Church."

A TITHE FOR THE BLESSED VIRGIN

When you plan your day, when you take under consideration the disposal of your time and of whatever goods of health, strength, wealth, friends and opportunities God has given you, plan wisely to give a tithe of all to the service of the Blessed Mother. When you take part in Sodality activities and are called on for suggestions, keep clearly before you that not only the one aim of personal sanctification, but the threefold ideal of personal holiness, the help of the neighbor and the defense of the Church forms the perfect round of the Sodality life. It is to this threefold effort that the great voices of the holy Pontiffs, echoing down the ages, call the Sodalists as to a heavenly chivalry. It is to this threefold work that they are exhorted by the age-long tradition of the Sodalities themselves, by the voices of thousands of zealous Directors, by the saints in heaven who were Sodalists on earth, the bright army of Sodalists in glory who once worked with us in this threefold apostolate, and now are reaping in heaven the fruit of their fidelity to the rules. It is this threefold service to God and His holy Mother which will be our consola-

tion when we lie on the bed of death. Then our hearts shall be full of joy and consolation at the prospect of that happy and speedy meeting, when she shall welcome us to her household of heaven because of our fidelity in her household of the Church on earth.

CHAPTER V

ACADEMIES

"IT IS quite in accordance with the original plan of Sodalities of Our Lady to have in them, especially if they are Sodalities of students, one or more academies for the young to practice themselves in scientific, literary, artistic, or economic exercises, to help them on in their studies or profession, and to secure for them, under the direction of competent persons, correct views on questions connected with Catholic faith and morals." (Rule 14.)

THE NEED OF NOVELTY

Directors of Sodalities sometimes complain that it is hard to keep up the interest of the members in the work of the Sodality. Begin something new, they say, and everyone is interested—for that year or period. But by degrees the interest wanes, and the next year one notices a falling-off of attendance; the year after, the work, whatever it is, seems in danger of dying of inanition.

There is nothing specially strange nor discouraging about such a condition. It is human nature to want novelty and to crave a change. Just here is the admirable efficiency of Sodality organization, that, while the Sodality itself supplies an element of permanency and goes on unchanged year after year, the various features of Sodality work for the

neighbor and the Church may be indefinitely varied and new features may be introduced from time to time to keep up interest.

THE MEANING OF "ACADEMY"

Particularly useful in this connection is the ancient custom of holding "academies." This name is consecrated by immemorial usage in the Sodality, and even before the Sodality of the Annunciation in Rome was raised by the Holy Father to the rank of Head Sodality there had long existed in the Roman College an academy composed of the students and called by that name. The word itself is derived, of course, from the name of the grove in Athens where Plato taught, and it has thence come to mean "a learned society." In Sodalities, and especially (though not, be it remembered, exclusively) in school Sodalities, the activities of the academy are those studious exercises mentioned in the rule.

THE ENDLESS FIELD FOR ACADEMIES

The subjects for the study and practice of which academies may be established are, as the rule indicates, extremely various and comprehensive. Science, with its endless subdivisions; literature, with all its aspects of theory, practice, and appreciation; art, with its countless relations; and finally commerce, the professions, the whole economy of modern life, make up the field from which academies may draw for their studies and discussions. One can find here material adapted to any class of persons, any grade of proficiency, any stage of education and culture. An endless variety of subject and treatment may therefore be introduced into the program of the academies.

It is interesting, as one goes over the records and

reports of Sodalities, to notice how this vast field has actually been covered and surveyed by the Sodalities of the present and the past. Thus, in the report of the young men's Sodality of Barcelona, we find that its academies have as their subjects of study respectively: law and sociology, medicine, science and pharmacy, philosophy, literature, apologetics, the fine arts, engineering, instrumental music, vocal music, English, German, etc., and that some of these academies have a membership of eighty or ninety members, while most of them number at least half a hundred. The Sodality of young men at Valencia, in Spain, is no less remarkable for the number and success of its academies. If one could take a census of all the Sodalities in the world, one would perhaps find it true of the academies, as it is of the social and charitable sections of the Sodalities, that they actually cover almost the whole wide field of effort which is theoretically given them in the rule.

Moreover, the treatment of these subjects may be suited to the special needs and capacity of the class to which their members belong. No methods are prescribed, no special procedure is obligatory. It would, of course, be well to adopt from the beginning some regular order of exercises, such, for instance, as the one suggested in an articie* in *The Queen's Work,* on Study Clubs.

IMPARTIAL ENCOURAGEMENT

It is to be noted that the purpose of the academies, as stated in the rule, is not merely to acquire information, but to aid their members *to practice themselves* in scientific, literary, artistic, or economic exercises. Hence, the more the work can be put in the

* Clubs for Social Study, by Francis S. Betten, S.J., Vol. II, p. 295.

hands of the members themselves, the better the purpose of the academy will be fulfilled. Indeed, the development of personal initiative, skill in speaking and debate, a practiced grasp of the details of a subject, and the ability to use effectively what one has acquired, are very precious results of work in an academy; and the Director in charge should be very chary of taking into his own hands anything that can be done by the members, since it is by actual practice that one gets the proficiency that is sought after. Here, as in so many other works of the Sodality, the skilful Director will know how to encourage, suggest, guide, and urge on the work of the academy, while he leaves to the officers the largest possible measure of responsibilty and initiative and gives them the largest personal credit for the good accomplished. Moreover, all the members, even those who have less talent, should be given a turn in the work of the academy with careful impartiality. Indeed, a rather special kindliness and encouragement is due to the backward ones, according to the true Sodality spirit of charity and mutual helpfulness.

MATURE SUPERVISION DESIRABLE

The rule goes on to direct that the work of the academy is to be carried on "under the direction of competent persons." Usually some one mature person, whether the Director of the Sodality or another, is given general supervision of the work, and, whenever possible, is present at all the meetings, to act as arbiter and adviser and to give a word of encouragement, criticism, and suggestion. Where the academy is made up of young folk or students and deals with religious subjects or matters of ethics or philosophy, this is the more important, to guard the members against the danger of mistaken doc-

trine. In the case of studies that demand experienced direction and instruction, the presence of someone who is trained and competent to direct the work is almost a necessity. But in the matter of debates and of discussions on some indifferent topic, it is well from time to time to let the members manage things for themselves. To throw them on their own resources, will develop their initiative and self-reliance and add to their interest in the work.

Where mature men and women organize an academy for some special study, their own practical good sense will direct them to seek the guidance they need in order to avoid errors and secure the results of culture and information which they seek. Though academies were first developed among students, one should emphasize the many opportunities they offer, with their flexible and effective organization, for associating grown-up folk together for mutual improvement. Academies for social study are especially desirable just at this time, when social problems seem destined to bulk large on the horizon of public affairs for a generation to come. Academies for the study of apologetics, for the explanation and defense of the Faith, would enlist and equip our better educated laity for the great apostolate of interesting and instructing non-Catholics and poorly instructed Catholics. In the professional Sodalities, especially those among the post-graduate students in schools of law and medicine, academies in ethics and philosophy would admirably supplement their professional training.

SOME DETAILED SUGGESTIONS

The Sodalities for nurses might well begin academies of ethics and professional conduct for their graduate members where the Sodalists could propose

and solve cases taken from experience. The teachers' Sodalities could find scope for many different academies among their members, and these might be the means not only of personal instruction, but of preparation for a higher position in their profession. It has been remarked and deplored that, though there are many Catholic teachers in the public schools, an altogether disproportionate number of them teach in the grammar grades and few are in the high schools and colleges. By means of academies the more proficient Catholic teachers could encourage the others to aspire to and prepare for better positions.

In a word, the institution of academies would be a means of bringing variety, interest and profit to nearly every Sodality. Academies in schools for literature and art would help to foster culture and refinement of taste among our students, and would tend to develop Catholic speakers and writers. Academies in Sodalities of the leisured and well-to-do might develop interest in charitable and social works through study, lectures and discussions. In the ranks of working men's and working women's Sodalities, academies in social study would be a means of instructing the Sodalists in the true rights of Labor, in their own responsibilities, and the teachings of the Church. An active Director, intent on making the most of the Sodality and willing to encourage and guide, will find many ways of turning the academy into a source of constant profit for his Sodalists. The organization and management of these academies has been dealt with by the present writer in another volume entitled *Social Organization in Parishes;* to which reference may be made for further practical details.

CHAPTER VI

THE SODALITY RETREAT

"THERE shall be a retreat every year for some days, closing with a general communion. The Director of each Sodality shall, with due regard to circumstances of importance, assign the time for the retreat, its length, and the order of time. It should, however, be borne in mind that the best time is usually during Lent. Certainly, the most fruitful retreat is the kind called 'closed'—made away from the world and one's friends. If this cannot be done, and if not even the entire day can be given to the exercises, it is well to have the retreat last six days, with at least two periods daily, morning and evening or night, with spiritual reading, meditation, conference, Holy Mass, and beads, as the principal exercises." (Rule 9.)

In the paragraph quoted, the rules go into great detail about a very important subject. There is to be a retreat each year for some days, and it is to close with a general communion. The Director shall arrange the details according to local circumstances, but Lent is suggested as the best time. The best sort of retreat for Sodalists to make—and this is a most important detail—is the kind called a "closed" retreat, in which one goes to a house, a convent, or a monastery, where one can be quite apart from the world and one's friends and devote the whole time to meditation and prayer, receiving instructions from the priest in charge of the retreat.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE SODALITY RETREAT

The next best thing to a closed retreat is to have the retreatants at least come to some central place, such as a convent, a seminary, or a boarding school in summer time and stay there all day, so as to be as recollected as possible and to concentrate their minds on the great work in hand. Last of all, if nothing better can be had, it is well, the rule says, to have the retreat last six days, with at least two periods every day—one in the morning, when everyone can be expected to be on hand before the work of the day begins, and one either in the afternoon or at night, whichever time is most convenient for the retreatants. Finally, the exercises to be given at these periods are spiritual reading in common, meditation, instructions by the priest in charge of the retreat, Mass, and the rosary.

Every one of these suggestions deserves attention and practical consideration. The holding of a retreat every year, at least for some days, is such an ancient and necessary part of the work of the fervent Sodality that it should never be neglected. Long beforehand the Director, with his council, should consider the best time for having a retreat, arrange for a place, decide what sort of retreat it shall be, whether a closed retreat, or, if that is not possible, how much time and fervor can be expected from the Sodalists, and when and where they will find it most convenient to come together.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A CAPABLE RETREAT MASTER

Then an experienced and capable Director of the retreat should be provided, and every other detail attended to which will influence the success of the exercises. This is the greatest Sodality event of the year.

Hardly any one thing so contributes to the zeal and fervor of the Sodality as to have a thoroughly prepared, well-conducted, fervently made retreat which all the members go through in common. In choosing a director it is very important to get one who is not only fervent, capable, and appealing, but who has also a thorough knowledge of the Sodality and will explain carefully in the course of the retreat its ideals, its work, and the requisites for being a good Sodalist. For, since the retreat is a preparation for the life of a whole year which is to follow, it is extremely necessary that Sodalists should receive definite, practical instructions as to their duties in the Sodality; and no Sodality retreat is complete which does not include a thoroughly clear explanation of the Sodality spirit and as much instruction in the rules and practices, the spiritual and temporal work of the Sodality, as is possible under the circumstances. Needless to say, the retreat should also aim at putting before the Sodalists the ideal of personal sanctification as set forth in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius.

LENT, THE BEST RETREAT TIME

The best period for retreats, as the rule prudently says, is the season of Lent, and Holy Week has been found a specially suitable time. Everyone is in a more penitential and thoughtful mood during this holy season, and the special graces which come from the Lenten practices of mortification and prayer help toward the spiritual renovation which is the purpose of the retreat. But there are also some other times of the year which are very popular and suitable. The days just preceding great feasts of Our Blessed Lady —the eighth of September, the eighth of December, the fifteenth of August; in fact all her notable feasts—are good seasons for Sodality retreats, because then the

usual fervor and devotion of the Sodalist to the Blessed Mother take special increase. When there is question of a closed retreat, the summer is often found the most suitable time, because then one can more readily get accommodations in boarding schools, convents, seminaries, and other places, where the student body is absent for vacation and their living quarters can be had for the retreatants.

Obviously, summer is a very unfavorable time for retreats which are to be held in church, since people are so little inclined during the warm season to come to religious meetings, and the attendance at the instructions is proportionately poor.

GIVING THE RETREAT PUBLICITY

Various means can be used to make the retreat a success. It is essential, of course, to give wide publicity to the exact time and place of the exercises as long beforehand as possible, so that everyone may put aside other engagements and prepare for the retreat. Then, too, all the little details that make for the comfort and satisfaction of the retreatants should be attended to. The exercises should begin on time and end on time, and should not be so unduly lengthy as to weary the retreatants. There should be a pleasant variety. It sometimes helps to have congregational singing, reading by different persons, and public conferences at which the Sodalists themselves can ask questions about the work of the Sodality or about some point that was brought up in the course of the retreat.

The more the Sodalists can be got to take an active part in the retreat and to realize that it is not a question merely of attending a few devotions or listening to some instructions, but of forming good resolutions and making a new start in life, the more they will

profit by the exercises. A question box may be set up at the chapel door, in which the Sodalists can place any questions or difficulties which they would like to have cleared up; and the retreat master, according to his judgment, may answer these questions after his conferences. Of course, entire silence should be insisted on during the exercises, and the more the retreatants can be got to keep silence between-whiles and to occupy themselves entirely with the business of the retreat, the better for them and for the others.

THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

The most fruitful retreats are those which follow more closely the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, adapted, of course, to the needs of the hearers. Retreats which are pieced together out of disjointed topics, and are given with oratorical effect, but without any development, systematic plan or climax, can hardly be called retreats at all. The essence of the retreat is its efficacy to strengthen the resolve of the retreatants to consecrate themselves more earnestly to God's service and to reform their lives. The twofold end of the retreat will be to increase the personal holiness of the Sodalist and to inspire him or her to zeal for Sodality work in behalf of the neighbor and the Church. Meetings should be held after the retreat or at convenient times after the exercises, to receive volunteers and to organize sections, the volunteers being at once instructed in their duties, so that they can take up their work immediately after the retreat is over.

THE CLOSED RETREAT MOST FRUITFUL

Very pertinently the rule says that the most fruitful retreat is the one called a "closed retreat." In fact,

a retreat of this sort is the only one which fully deserves the name. The word "retreat" means to withdraw, to go aside, to get apart from one's daily interests, cares, and occupations, so as to converse with God, review one's past life, see how one has been in accord with the teachings of Christ, and how one has gone astray, and then make ready, by a good confession, to set all straight and, by practical, strong, well-reasoned resolutions, to do better in the future and steer a straighter course for God and heaven. One can do this best by going aside entirely from one's ordinary occupations.

Something can be accomplished by coming to a common center for most of the day, but it is very hard for most people really to retreat from their occupations and really to retire from the world and their friends by merely attending instructions in the morning and evening, while the rest of their day is taken up with ordinary tasks. The full efficacy of the retreat, which consists in saturating one's mind with holy thoughts and stirring up one's will to holy desires and resolves, can hardly be had where most of the day is given to the world, and only the early morning and late evening are consecrated to God. Hence the urgent recommendation that wherever possible arrangement be made for the Sodalists to make their retreat in a secluded place—a retreat house, where they can live for the entire duration of the exercises and give their whole time to the work before them. Of course, in many cases this is quite impossible. But the closer the retreat approaches to this complete withdrawal from the world, the more efficacious it is likely to prove.

Hence, it is well to persuade the retreatants, even where the retreat is held in a church or a chapel, to spend as much of their time as they can in silence,

make frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament, and keep themselves aloof as much as possible from the distractions of their ordinary daily life. The closed retreats generally last three or four days, and a convenient arrangement is to have them begin on Thursday or Friday and end on Monday morning. In this way as little as possible is taken from the workaday week. Where, however, these closed retreats are impossible, it is well to have the retreat last six days. The Sodality retreats, as so often arranged, which consist in morning and evening instructions on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, are scarcely to be dignified by the name of retreat at all. A solid week of earnest work every morning and every evening, with prayer and recollection in between, can much more reasonably be expected to produce lasting fruit. Therefore, when arranging a retreat give as many days as possible, five or six if you can, to the exercises.

THE PRINCIPAL EXERCISES OF THE RETREAT

The principal exercises indicated are spiritual reading, meditation, conferences, Mass, and beads. To these the Way of the Cross and other prayers in common are sometimes added and half-hours are assigned during the day for the consideration of one's state, serious reflection on vocation, and the forming and strengthening of practical, definite resolutions. It is a good plan to post up in a promient place at the beginning of the retreat a complete schedule of the exercises, giving the hours and, if need be, the places where they are to be held. A very profitable plan, too, is to have a special sheet for every day, which will give a maxim or saying, synopsizing the special spirit of the day, assign a patron saint, and indicate in outline the thoughts which are to occupy the retreatants during the day, the spiritual reading which they are

invited to take from the Holy Scripture and the Imitation, suggested good resolves, etc.

SPIRITUAL READING DURING RETREAT

Each retreatant may then copy down this schedule and have it as a reminder and an encouragement during the retreat. Where a closed retreat is held, spiritual reading is given during meals and at other times. Good readers should be chosen, and, of course, the books should be such as treat of subjects in accord with the thoughts proposed by the master of retreat.

These suggestions apply in particular to closed retreats, but they can be carried out with slight modifications even where the retreats are held merely in the church or chapel. For example, after the regular conferences or instructions the retreatants can be invited to spend a few moments in prayer and thought in the chapel, make the Way of the Cross, or say the beads together; then retire to the school hall or some convenient place nearby for spiritual reading in common. Those who can spare the time may remain for these exercises, and the rest will be free to go about their work.

THE CONCLUSION OF THE RETREAT

The retreat ends with the Apostolic Benediction, with a solemn renewal of the Act of Consecration to the Blessed Virgin, and a reception of candidates. Those who make their Act of Consecration are given the medal and become full members of the Sodality.

AN ORGANIZATION MEETING

It is a very good practice to have an organization meeting at the end of the retreat, at which all the Sodalists are invited to enroll themselves in one or another of the sections, and the work to be done

for the ensuing year is agreed on. The time of the retreat is often a good occasion to have a campaign for new members. This is better done just before the retreat, so that those who wish to join the Sodality may have the benefit of the exercises, during which explanations of the Sodality spirit and work should always be given. If this cannot be managed, however, a campaign may be begun immediately after the retreat, and some of the more fervent of the retreatants may be appointed as instructors to communicate to the new members what they have learned during the retreat.

HOUSES OF RETREAT

It is needless to say in this connection that the Sodalists ought to take a special and intense interest in the establishment of houses of retreat. If there were in each large city even one of these houses of retreat for men and one for women, where the Sodalists could make their retreats apart from the distractions of daily life, what an increase it would bring in Sodality spirit and what a growth in the activities of Sodality life! This is the end we must all work for and pray for, that these training schools of the spiritual life, these centers of inspiration and of the supernatural spirit may increase and multiply until there is no section of our vast country where fervent Catholics cannot easily obtain the inestimable benefits of a closed retreat.

CHAPTER VII

SODALITY SECTIONS

"TO DO these works successfully it will be well, if the number and character of the Sodalists permit, to form particular sections, each with an organization and life of its own, though always subject to the governing authority of the Sodality." (Rule 12.)

The name "sections" is a comparatively new term in Sodality organization. The reality is of long standing among fervent Sodalists of the Blessed Virgin. But in these latter days, owing to the increasing need of the lay apostolate and to the growing tendency for more definite organization, there has been a notable increase of interest in sections and a wider recognition of the usefulness and even the positive need of this form of Sodality organization.

THE PURPOSE OF SECTIONS

The purpose of sections is clearly indicated in the present rule. The preceding rule has spoken of the threefold aim of the Sodality: First, to procure the greatest possible holiness for its members by fostering piety among them; second, to extend its influence to many others for the good of souls by leading them to practice works of charity toward their neighbor, and finally to enlist the Sodalists in working for the defense and spread of the Church of Christ. This present rule declares that to do these works successfully it will be well, if the number and character of

the Sodalists permits, to form particular sections, to each one of which is to be entrusted some characteristic work of the Sodality.

There is an old saying to the effect that "what is everybody's business is nobody's business," a maxim which explains the neglect of many needed activities among Catholics. Since a Sodality is composed of many individuals, with different capabilities, tastes and inclinations, it is quite natural that many good works should be neglected unless definite groups of persons are encouraged to devote themselves to particular good works to which they are by nature or by grace inclined. By dividing up the activities among committees or sections of the members, each individual is helped to undertake whatever he or she is best fitted for by joining the corresponding section. Then, each group of Sodalists having something definite to do in which they are particularly interested, for which they have volunteered, and which is well within their capacity, the whole work of the Sodality will proceed in an orderly, effective way.

A phrase in the rule calls attention to the fact that the number and character of the Sodalists should guide the officers and Directors in establishing sections. This rule must be held in mind throughout the planning of work.

DISCREET SELECTION OF ACTIVITIES

Directors and officers are sometimes bewildered at the number of suggestions made for Sodality activities. They pore over the lists of proposed sections for the good of the Sodality, the benefit of individual members, the help of the neighbor and the defense of the Church, and are so confused at the number and variety of the activities described, that they conclude that the whole plan is impracticable or at least entirely

unsuited to their own Sodalists, whom they know to be capable of very few of the elaborate works proposed. The answer to their difficulty is, of course, that it is never intended nor expected that any one Sodality will undertake everything suggested. It is necessary to make a very great variety of suggestions to catch the interest and attract the attention of the great diversity of persons who are members, officers, Directors of Sodalities. But each Director and officer is supposed to consider the character and number of his own Sodalists, and then to form only those particular sections whose work for self, the neighbor and the Church the Sodalists may be expected to accomplish successfully. Neither is it well in the beginning to choose too many sections nor to draw up too ambitious a program. One must foresee what will prove most attractive to the Sodalists and be likely to enlist their persevering coöperation. Then a few promising and popular works are to be undertaken and the establishment of new sections carried on discreetly so as to keep up the interest which always comes with novelty, but at the same time not to overload nor overwork the members of the Sodality.

THE SEPARATE GOVERNMENT OF SECTIONS

The method of government of the sections is indicated in the second part of this rule. Each is to have a life of its own and its own organization, though always subject to the general authority of the Sodality. Perhaps the best way to explain this separate life and organization of the section is to compare it to the committees of legislative bodies. The two branches of our National Congress, as well as the legislatures of the States, have a number of standing committees to each one of which is entrusted some particular department of legislation, and each of which has the task of

considering bills proposed, formulating measures, and doing the preliminary work in the name of the whole body. In this way a great deal of time is saved, because it would be impossible for the whole of Congress or of the Legislature to get through all this work as a body. We see the same principle applied in the government of the Church. The Pope appoints committees of cardinals, called congregations, and these in turn transact certain businesses for him. There is the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, the Congregation of Indulgences, the Congregation of the Index, etc., each one entrusted with a department of Papal action. In a quite similar way committees, called "sections," are formed in the Sodality, and each of these committees has its own officers, a president, a secretary and a treasurer, sometimes a librarian or custodian of the section's property, and whatever other officials are needful or useful to carry on its work. These sections have their own meetings, in addition to the regular meetings of the Sodality, discuss their affairs, and carry on their activities in the most effective way they can, with the advice and encouragement, indeed, of the officers and Director, but through their own life and organization.

THE SECTIONS SUBJECT TO AUTHORITY

The final clause of the rule is also significant. Though the section is to have an organization and life of its own, it is always to be subject to the governing authority of the Sodality. It is of course always necessary for the Sodalists to be subject to authority, since the Sodality is a religious organization. Theoretically the power of the Director and the officers is great; but practically it is tempered by charity and regulated by prudence. This subjec-

tion of the sections to their authority should not be a hindrance to the work, but rather an occasion of merit and a help to progress. There is no question that individuals are sometimes imprudent and that it is well to have some disinterested persons who will be able to protect the Sodality from any rash step on the part of a particular section. On the other hand, no enlightened and prudent Director would deliberately block a good work on the part of Sodalists, since he would know that by so doing he would incur personal responsibility for the injury to the Sodality and for the loss of good effort which should result. In practice, then, this control of the section is a kindly, encouraging supervision, by which the Director and officers will show their interest in the work of the section, give aid and counsel where it is needed, and see to it that regular and full reports of the work of the section are given to the whole Sodality, and that no member exceeds the bounds of prudence and discretion in undertaking and accomplishing the section's work.

HISTORIC INSTANCES OF SECTIONS

It is very interesting to read the annals of the Sodality and to see how this idea of sections has occurred again and again—not always, however, under that name—in historic Sodalities at different times and under various circumstances. One of the most notable instances is the Men's Sodality of Caen, in France, whose activities are summarized in a historic letter preserved in the city library of Caen, which was written by the Director of the Sodality, probably to one of his fellow Directors, on the 15th of August, 1720. The work itself had been taken up in 1699, so that this Sodality antedates in the beginning of

its activities by nearly one hundred years the establishment of our Republic. The first section was composed of members who made up a purse among themselves to lend without interest to laborers and tradesmen—a prototype of the Poor Men's Banks of our day. The second section was for the visiting of the poor in the parishes in the suburbs, which was very methodically carried on. The third was a section to promote the teaching of trades to poor but industrious boys. The fourth was for helping the poor to start in business or get work. The fifth was for visiting the sick poor, providing linen, food and supplies for them. The sixth was for giving a spiritual retreat to twenty-five young girls at Christmas; the seventh, for visiting the poor in prisons; and the eighth, for the help of the foreign missions.

THE SECTIONS OF THE BARCELONA SODALITY

One of the most remarkable instances of present-day organization into sections is the Young Men's Sodality of St. Aloysius, of Barcelona. It has a section for perpetual praise of Our Lady, St. Joseph and St. Aloysius, which is divided into three subsections, each fully organized with its own officer. There are sections for visiting the hospitals, the leper hospital, the poorhouse, the Little Sisters of the Poor, and a section to collect cast-off clothing for distribution. There are sections for the spread of the Faith, a catechism section, a section for boys' clubs, one for Sunday communion, one for visits to the Blessed Sacrament, one for mutual benevolence, a savings bank and coöperative store, the House of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel section, a day school, a house for working children and young men, a lecture section, the apostolate of the press section, etc.

SOME PRACTICABLE SECTIONS

It would hardly be practicable in this brief compass to go over all the various works possible to sections and to enumerate them in detail. This rather belongs, as we have said, to the companion volume *Social Organization in Parishes.* But one may mention that the sections divide themselves naturally into those for the benefit of the members of the Sodality and of the Sodality itself; those for the help of the neighbor; and those whose purpose is one aspect or another of the defense of the Church and the spread of the Faith. Among the sections for the benefit of the Sodality come the sociability section, the membership section, the entertainment section, the section for lectures and study clubs, the loan-fund section, the section for frequent communion, the section for daily Mass, for perpetual praise, the meditation section, the retreat section, and for similar work. Those sections for the help of the neighbor are almost without end in number and activities: parish welfare, parish school aid, parish visitors, traveler's aid, day nursery, immigrants' classes, sections for business advice, Catholic literature, Scripture study, the Christ-Child section, vacation schools, catechetical instruction, the revalidation of marriages, visiting the sick and imprisoned, instructing converts, pilgrimages, church adornment, visiting the orphans, work for the missions, correspondence, educating students for the priesthood, the Union of Prayer, reparation, the home missions, settlement houses, night schools, talks to poor mothers on home-making, hygiene and sanitation, making scrap-books for children in hospitals, the wardrobe of the poor, lunch for school children, mothers' and daughters' day, fathers' and sons' day, work for the blind and for the deaf, art

study, lectures in public squares and forums, circulating Catholic literature in street cars and railroad stations, an exchange for women's handiwork, gymnasium classes and recreation work, dramatic classes, boys' clubs, remodeling clothes for the poor, Christmas baskets, visiting sick Sodalists, penny collections, the Self-Denial Fund, The Crusade of the Blessed Sacrament, making altar vestments, parish housekeepers, the question box, book talks. One grows breathless in making this brief and partial enumeration, yet these are only a few of the almost innumerable activities which are being carried on by Sodalities throughout the world.

ONE SECTION AFTER ANOTHER

The very catalogue of so much work, fruitful and consoling both in a spiritual and temporal way, should stir our Sodalists to zeal and fervor in the formation and carrying on of these activities in behalf of the Blessed Mother. As we have said, it is not intended that more than a few of these good works be taken up at first. When one or two or three well-organized and fervent sections are well under way, it will not be difficult to continue adding to the number of sections and to interest new recruits. "What is worth doing is worth doing well" is eminently true of the Sodality activities, and there will be ample time for the Sodalists to develop first one and then another of the good works to which they feel inclined. The great point is to make a beginning, and go carefully from step to step in the organization of sections, until every activity which the Sodality is confident it can undertake and to which the members feel inclined, has been duly taken up by a section. After that, it will be a simple matter to encourage all the members of the Sodality to enlist for one or another of the

works proposed, and so gradually to get everyone to do his little part in making up the great sum total of effort required of our Sodalities in honor of the Blessed Mother.

When it comes to choosing the work to be first intrusted to sections in the Sodality, the officers and Directors would do well to consult the Sodalists themselves. With the aid of the book just referred to, they will be able to put before the Sodalists a comprehensive survey of the works that are possible and practicable for their Sodality. Then, calling for volunteers and organizing the groups, they will allow each section to elect their own officers and to set about doing their share of the Sodality work.

VARIETY WITH PERMANENCE

We should not leave this subject without calling attention to one immense benefit of the sections. They give opportunity to the Sodalist for an almost endless variety of occupations while at the same time keeping to the old tried standards of the Sodality. There is a certain natural and human craving for novelty which makes it necessary to organize, from time to time, new work in all societies to keep the members interested and active. Through the Sodality, this novelty can be had without the burden and risk of forming an entirely new organization. The element of change is reconciled to the element of permanence. Activities vary, but the Sodality endures. Again, these sections will supply endless opportunity for enlisting every class and age of persons in the work of the Church. The children may have their sections—for frequent communion, for gathering and distributing Catholic literature, for the help of the missions by the Self-Denial Fund, and for the Union of Prayer. The young men and young women can expand their

activities, as they choose and are able, into any of the works mentioned above and described at greater length in the companion volume referred to; while the married men and married women of the parish can take up still more varied sections, changing and modifying the work at will, but at the same time keeping always their permanent organization as Sodalists. Such an organization, devout, supernatural, active, flexible, admitting the greatest variety of effort while maintaining the greatest permanence and stability of motive and organization, surely is a providential means to meet the needs of the times.

CHAPTER VIII

SODALITY WORKS OF CHARITY

"OUR Lady's Sodality aims at procuring the greatest possible holiness for its members and extending to many others their salutary influence for the good of souls. It must therefore labor by various means to foster piety in the Sodalists, and lead them to Catholic works of charity for their neighbor. The chief of these works are the teaching of catechism, visiting the sick in hospitals, and those confined in prison—works to which the early Sodalities devoted themselves with great zeal—or others like these, as the circumstances of our times may in different places require." (Rule 12.)

THE PROGRAM OF SODALITY ACTION

This rule is, so to say, the Magna Charta of Sodality activities in behalf of the neighbor and the Church. It states very clearly, first, the chief aim of the Sodality, which is to procure the greatest possible holiness for its members, making them exemplary Catholics, through their devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, inspiring them through this devotion with such an interior fervor as will overflow in good works. It gives explicitly the second great purpose of the Sodality: to extend to many others the salutary influence of its members for the good of souls. Then in logical conclusion it draws the inference, so reasonable and necessary, that in order to achieve these

two great purposes of personal sanctification and the help of the neighbor the Sodality must labor by various means to foster piety in the Sodalists and lead them to practice works of charity for their neighbor. This is clear and explicit, and it forms a conclusive answer to those well-meaning persons who mistakingly assert that the Sodality is meant merely to foster devotion. Its scope, as given authoritatively by this rule, is world-wide. It is meant to obtain the greatest possible holiness for its members and to extend as greatly as possible their influence for the good of souls.

NO SODALITY WITHOUT GOOD WORKS

It is a serious error, then, to consider that a Sodality can be carried on properly without the practice of works of charity toward the neighbor. It is possible, of course, to keep up a certain quantum of devotion by occasional meetings and monthly communion. The pious faithful will attend these gatherings and go to holy communion together with regularity. A very large membership may even be built up in this way. Misled by the fallacy of numbers, the officers and Director may console themselves with the belief that their Sodality is in excellent shape and thoroughly edifying. But such a Sodality can hardly be called an organization at all; it partakes rather of the nature of a devotion, and many of the Sodalists who come to the meeting can scarcely be said to belong to the Sodality actively any more than they belong to Benediction or the Holy Hour, which they attend with equal regularity, and in which they take just about as active a part as they do in the Sodality. The Sodality is a society, a religious body, an organization, approved by the Holy See, and it has its definite program, which includes works of charity

toward the neighbor and supposes that every faithful member of the Sodality will take some active part in work in honor of the Blessed Mother.

ACTIVE WORK TRADITIONAL

The traditions of the best Sodalities bear witness that this active effort for the neighbor is part of the very soul of the Sodality life. These works of charity naturally divide themselves into those which Sodalists carry on for their fellow members, such as mutual prayer, works of sociability and entertainment, the promotion of the Sodality library, the holding of lecture courses and study clubs and night schools for Sodalists, and a number of similar activities. Next come the charitable activities of Sodalists for the help of the neighbor, for parish welfare, for catechetical instruction, the aid of the poor, the help of children, the spread of Catholic literature, the maintaining of circulating libraries, and a whole host of other activities too many to mention.

The chief of these works, according to the tradition of the Sodality these many years, are the teaching of catechism and the visiting of the sick in hospitals and of those confined to prison—"works," says the rule, "to which the early Sodalists devoted themselves with great zeal." It was a characteristic of the Sodalists from the beginning, to take up what seemed to be most needed and most fruitful for the neighbor and the Church at that special time. But it must not be thought that these particular good works exhaust the vocation of the Sodalist. The rule is careful to say that others are to be undertaken as the circumstances of our times may in different places require. The same spirit which induced the Sodalists of old to take up the timely activities of their day should urge our Sodalists to seize new

occasions and keep up with the tradition of the Sodality of doing whatever is most for the glory of God and the good of souls in their own days.

THE NEED OF CATECHETICAL WORK

The work of teaching catechism and that of visiting the sick and imprisoned, are, of course, still as timely as ever. All of our Sodalists may profitably interest themselves in catechetical instruction. We have opportunity for this good work all about us. The vast number of children of immigrants and of the poor who are going to public schools is an appeal to our charity to teach them their religion out of school hours, for without our aid many of them must inevitably be lost to the Church. Statistics show that though there are nearly two million Catholic children in our schools, there are about four million of school age. The sad fact is clear that upward of two million of our children are deprived of a Catholic school education. Many of these are receiving no instruction whatever in their religion. Who that has the interest of the Faith at heart will not be moved to desire to do some little bit at least toward giving these Catholic children the religious instruction which is their birthright? As to the visiting of prisoners and the sick, this requires often a degree of maturity and experience which the individual Sodalist may not possess. But those that are qualified will find the work singularly fruitful and consoling.

WORK FOR THE MISSIONS

Leaving these characteristics and immemorial charities of the Sodality, one finds besides an endlessly rich and varied field of apostolic labor. There are foreign missions, where a thousand million pagans

still stretch their hands to us from the darkness of horrid error and plead for our alms to help them to the truth. This time of ours is called the hour of God in the foreign missions because the spread of Western information and culture has so disposed the people of the East to receive Christian teaching. Vast numbers of them are eager to obtain instruction and Baptism, and the only obstacle is the poverty of the missionaries and their inability to found schools and employ catechists enough to supplement their labors. Through the Self-Denial Fund, by making contributions to the missions themselves as a fruit of their little sacrifices and by getting their acquaintances to do the same, our Sodalists can constantly help this work of converting the pagans. Many other activities will likewise occur to them in aid of the missions, such as adopting a school, a catechist, or a seminarist, sewing for the missions, sending mission supplies, and holding lectures and illustrated talks on the missions to excite general interest in this important work.

FOR CATHOLIC LITERATURE

Another sphere in which Sodality action is vastly needed is work for the benefit of Catholic literature. The sects show a perverse ingenuity in spreading their mistaken doctrines by innumerable booklets and pamphlets placed in the railroad stations, left in the cars, and circulated through public libraries. We should display at least an equal zeal in spreading the truth by church-door libraries, book racks, the introducing of Catholic books in the public libraries, the systematic circulating of books which are already there. These excellent ways of helping Catholic literature are within the scope of almost any Sodality.

Book talks and lectures on Catholic literature, the

holding of interesting programs of essays on Catholic writers, and readings from Catholic books, debates and discussions among Sodalists concerning their favorite Catholic authors, all these are effective ways of helping Catholic literature. Anything which will interest our people in Catholic books and make them systematic readers of Catholic literature is a distinct service to the Church. Our late Holy Father, Pius X, who had been a parish priest before he became patriarch of Venice and then Pope, counted it among his greatest achievements that he had begun a Catholic paper for Venice, and he said once with great earnestness that it is in vain to multiply Catholic churches and Catholic schools if we do not raise about them the bulwark of a well-supported Catholic press.

WORK FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Finally, we should like again to call the attention of all our Sodalists to the great modern need of friendliness and sociability among our people. So many Catholic young men and Catholic young women drift into parishes and find no welcome. The large cities, for all their crowds, are the loneliest places for newcomers. If each Sodality would make it a point to welcome those of their own age and sex, to greet them pleasantly and introduce them to the pastor and to the Sodality, a great many souls would be kept to the Church who now drift away, get into non-Catholic associations, marry outside the Church, and are entirely lost to the Catholic influences.

CHAPTER IX

THE OFFICERS OF THE SECTIONS

" . . . . particular sections, each with an organization and life of its own though always subject to the governing authority of the Sodality." (Rule 13.)

DIVIDING THE LABOR

A division of labor is always expedient in organizations like the Sodality, and indeed is generally necessary if the work of the Sodality is to be done properly. Where any one person or any small group of persons undertakes the whole burden of management, either they will be borne down by details or else the work itself will not go on properly. To get a number of individuals each to assume some part of the work of direction, is to make each one's task easier and to get the whole work done better.

If this is true of the whole Sodality, it is equally true of the sections, which are entrusted each one with a definite department of Sodality effort. They too, as the present rule indicates, should be thoroughly organized and should have each one its own officers and its own life, subject always, of course, to the governing authority of the Sodality.

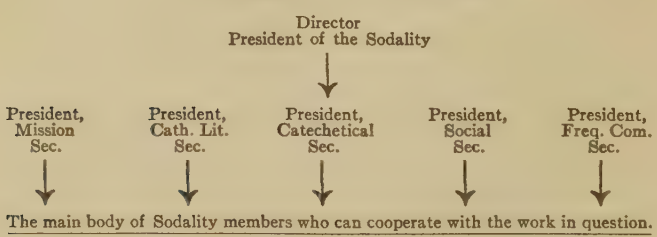
THE NUMBER OF OFFICERS

The officers of the sections should be as many or as few as the work requires. Always there must

be a chairman or president to preside at meetings and to give general direction to the work. Usually a secretary is required, and where there are funds to be administered, a treasurer. The other officers may be chosen and named as need shall require; as, for example, if books are to be taken care of, there may be a librarian, or if reading is to be done, there may be a reader.

The influence of the prefect of the Sodality proper should be exerted on the officers of the sections to keep them up to their work. These officers of the sections in turn ought to bestir themselves to keep their own members active. The members of the section will then exert an influence on the whole body of the Sodality by getting the Sodalists individually and collectively interested in helping the particular activity of which the section has been given charge. We may make this clearer perhaps by a diagram:

A DIAGRAM OF INFLUENCE


Director
President of the Sodality
President, Mission Sec.
President, Cath. Lit. Sec.
President, Catechetical Sec.
President, Social Sec.
President, Freq. Com. Sec.
The main body of Sodality members who can cooperate with the work in question.

Here again the arrows indicate the lines of influence which, beginning with the President of the Sodality, go out to the officers of the sections and through them reach the section members, who in turn work upon the Sodalists. Thus, for example, the president of the Sodality encourages the president of the mission section to set up a Self-Denial Box for offerings for the

mission and to begin other missionary activities. The president of the section stirs up the members to work thus for the missions. The individual members of the section appeal to the Sodalists in general for mission-aid. Thus the business of the Sodality president is with the section officers, their affair is with the members, the members' business is with the Sodalists themselves in general.

Once this organization is understood, it simplifies matters greatly. There is no need of confusion or misunderstanding if every officer does his or her part. The division of labor lightens the work. If the Sodality President or the Director were to try to do everything in person, the task would be too great and the activities would suffer. But if the president confines himself to stimulating the work of the section officers, he can manage this without too much difficulty. If they, each one, rouse up their own section to effort, its particular field will be covered. This simple division of energy and responsibility would make successful many Sodalities which now are droning along half dead and without leadership or initiative.

SECTION REPORTS AT GENERAL MEETINGS

The reports of the presidents of the section should always be a very interesting feature of Sodality meetings. It is well to include as a regular feature of the business meeting "reports of officers of sections," and the president of the Sodality should call on one after the other for a report. Sometimes there is nothing to say, but even in that case the officer of the section should arise and signify that he or she has nothing to make known to the Sodality. The mere mention of the name of the section in its turn, will serve to call attention to its department of work. The

next time, the section president will take more care to have something to say if he knows he is to be called on.

This feature of the meetings ought never to be omitted except for some weighty reason. The routine of the meetings will be considerably lightened by this interesting feature. It will be an incentive, besides, to the members to join the sections, and will stimulate the section members to have something worthy to report.

THE FREQUENCY OF SECTION MEETINGS

The meetings of the sections themselves may be as frequent as need requires. They may take place from time to time after the regular meeting of the Sodality if this is desired. At times, especially in the beginning of organization, more frequent gatherings are advisable. Afterward, when everyone knows what to do, the reunions may be only occasional. Useless meetings are always to be avoided, and where the section members are called together the program ought to be planned beforehand by the president and other officers so that the meeting may never grow tedious nor waste time.

The question as to what sections should be organized depends largely for its solution on local conditions. Where the Sodality is large and good officers are plentiful, there is no reason why quite a number of sections may not be established at once, and in that case the officers should each be carefully instructed so that everyone may know just what his or her section is expected to accomplish. Once the officers have clear ideas, they can guide the section. Neither the Director nor the prefect should try to do too much himself. It is much better, we repeat, to spend energy in training the officers and then to let them attend to the work of the sections themselves.

THE MISSION SECTION OF WIDE APPEAL

Some activities are universal in their appeal, and sections to promote them may be organized in almost any Sodality. Work for the missions is of this general utility and appropriateness, so that a well-officered mission section should always or nearly always find place in the Sodality. School children from their earliest years can help the missions by their acts of self-denial and by their prayers. A mission section among even the youngest Sodalists trains little minds and hearts to take an interest in, to pray for, and work for the needy missions, and the section officers will be specially impressed. Vocations for the missionary life may thus be fostered, and the field is so vast, the thousand millions of pagans still on earth are so destitute of spiritual aid in many places, that there is indefinite opportunity for fruitful work in the mission section. Toil as they will, our Sodalists can never come to the end of that great field, now white for the harvest.

FOR CATHOLIC LITERATURE

Another section of very general appeal is that for the spread of Catholic literature, a cause timely beyond question and neglected strangely even by zealous Catholics. Here again every age may find its work to do in encouraging the placing of Catholic books in Catholic homes, in distributing leaflets and pamphlets, in forming Sodality libraries and keeping the books in active circulation, in establishing study clubs, holding book talks, circulating lists of selected books; in a word, by praying and working for the cause of Catholic literature in all its departments of good influence. The officers of this section should be trained with special care.

Even younger children can be taught to pray and to work for this cause, and older folk can accomplish very much if they have good will and are directed in a well-organized Sodality section for Catholic literature. The little ones can collect and bring to school the Catholic magazines and papers they find about their homes and which are no longer wanted there. Older children have been successful in getting subscriptions for Catholic periodicals and in circulating Catholic books and pamphlets. Their elders have a whole world of possible activities in behalf of Catholic literature in the parish, in the home, in the whole city or town where they dwell. Good reading is the beginning of so many other excellent activities, is a means of such extraordinary efficacy in instructing the ignorant, counseling the doubtful, consoling the sorrowful, that to distribute good literature is a whole series of spiritual works of mercy accomplished in a single action.

THE FREQUENT COMMUNION SECTION

Sections for the promotion of frequent communion are likewise of very general application. From the age of reason until the grave, frequent communion is the ideal of the Church for her children. The wonderful letter of Pope Pius X, of holy memory, has made this most clear to all who will read, and everyone can participate in zealous activities for the accomplishment of the wishes of the Holy Father, of the Church, herself, and of the Sacred Heart of Christ, that all who can do so should go to communion frequently and, if possible, every day.

Hence, a section for the practice and the spread of frequent communion should be included in all Sodalities. By means of little leaflets, to be had in quantities at a trifling cost, the officers and members

of this section may bring to the attention of their friends the advantages and privileges of frequent communion, and may encourage them to go often to the Holy Table. Sometimes the officers especially may say a word of tactful encouragement to some likely person who could easily go to communion often, but who seems not to have realized the excellence of this opportunity.

One active apostle of frequent communion can sometimes persuade many friends to join the Crusade for frequent communion conducted by *The Queen's Work*. Where a whole group are active in interesting their acquaintances in frequent communion, the results are notable. Children in this regard may be the apostles of other children; and indeed not a few grown-up persons have been influenced to more frequent communion by the contagious enthusiasm of younger folk, who in their turn had received at school the impulse and desire to go often to receive Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.

PARTICULAR SECTIONS

For the rest, each Sodality should develop particular sections which answer the aptitudes and preferences of its members. In societies of adults there should be a catechetical section, having for its purpose the training of members to teach catechism, and the formation of classes of neglected children and their instruction in the faith. This activity, where practicable, is to be very highly commended. Many hundreds of thousands of Catholic children in this country are, as we have elsewhere shown, in need of just such religious teaching. The laity alone can meet their need. Out of some four million Catholic children of school age in this country, hardly more than two million can be accommodated in the Catholic

schools. The others must be taught in catechism centers or many will be lost to the faith. Vacation schools for these children should also be provided by zealous sections of the Sodalities. The field here is so great and fruitful that it should stir mightily the zeal of good Catholics.

DIVERSIFIED OPPORTUNITIES

Other sections which may be mentioned in passing are those for parish welfare, for parish school aid, for night schools, poor aid, the instruction of immigrants, for Scripture study, for a mothers' club, for prisoners' aid, for sociability, for the study of history, apologetics, Christian art, social science and conditions, etc. We have space only to mention these, but they will be found repeated in detail in the book entitled *Social* [Sodality] *Organization in Parishes.*

It should be remembered, too, as has been said before, that these sections may be discontinued at any time, new ones established, changes made in the manner of working. Of course, where a section meets a permanent need, as in the case of most of those we have mentioned, it should be kept up as well as possible. But the sections supply an element of variety and interest and new ones should be suggested from time to time while old ones are revived, changed, adapted as need requires. In this way the Sodality offers a permanent and constant means of organization, while the sections can supply variety, change, novelty, which is often the spice of effort. Well understood and put in practice, the sections are admirably adapted to modern needs of organization.

CHAPTER X

THE TEACHING OF CATECHISM

"THE chief of these works, are the teaching of catechism, visiting the sick in hospitals and those confined in prison—works to which the early Sodalities devoted themselves with great zeal—or others like these, as the circumstances of our times may in different places require." (Rule 12.)

A MOST FRUITFUL AND NEEDED WORK

There are two reasons why the teaching of catechism is mentioned first among those activities which are proper to Sodalists. The first is that this work was a favorite activity of the early Sodalists. The second and the most excellent reason is that the teaching of catechism forms one of the most fruitful of all the activities open to lay folk. Either reason alone would be quite sufficient to justify giving a special chapter to the subject. Taken together, they seem to demand that special emphasis be put on this most important activity.

Catechetical instruction is a work which is quite generally needed, and in which a very great number of lay folk of different ages and various conditions of life may readily exercise their charity. To teach catechism requires, after all, only sound instruction in the elements of the Catholic religion, with patience and good will. The advanced students in high schools and colleges are quite capable of conducting at least

the early classes in catechism, and numbers of them are doing so with fair success. Young men and women who are zealous and well instructed can often be got to give their Sunday afternoons to teaching catechism, and they will be encouraged when they realize the remarkable fruitfulness of their exertions.

MANY COMPETENT TEACHERS

The Catholic teachers in public schools, coming in contact as they do with so many Catholic children whose home instruction is defective and who receive no lessons in religion in public schools, are often very willing to teach catechism. They are, of course, specially competent to do so because their experience in class has taught them how to manage children, and in their catechetical work they find before them the same pupils whom they had in school.

But any well-instructed adult or college student can teach catechism. Even in Sodalities in the lower grades of our schools it would be well to have a section or academy to interest the children in catechetical instruction, to get them to pray for the success of catechism classes and to call their attention to the fact that they should try to learn their religion very well so that when they grow older they may take part, like good Sodalists, in the catechetical instruction of younger children.

THE URGENCY OF THE PROBLEM

The importance of this work and the need of interesting our lay folk in doing their share therein, can scarcely be overemphasized. No child can be a good Catholic unless it learns its Faith thoroughly. This requires careful and systematic teaching. By whom shall this instruction be given? The natural answer

which comes to the mind of many lay people is that the priests and the Sisters should give it, or that it should be imparted to the child at home. Indeed, at the present moment our priests and Sisters are engaged in teaching some two million Catholic children their faith in the parish schools. But there are, besides, about the same number of other Catholic children who are not attending the parish schools but are for the most part pupils in public schools. Indeed there is no room for them in the parish schools. Most of our schools are filled to their capacity, some of them are sadly overcrowded, yet it is a strain upon the resources of the parishes in many cases to maintain the schools they already possess. To instruct all the Catholic children in their religion in parish schools, would require that we almost double our present school system. This is indeed most desirable, but it will inevitably come slowly. In the meanwhile something must be done to meet the need of those children who either can find no place in parish schools or whose parents refuse to send them there. They are growing rapidly beyond the age of childhood. Every year tens of thousands of them pass out from the school age and mingle with the world of men.

A PITIFUL CONTRAST IN OPPORTUNITIES

If we could realize the exceeding need of these children for religious instruction it would certainly be a great stimulus to the zeal of our Sodalists and others to take up this work of catechetical instruction. Moreover, those same Catholic children who are in the public schools and are therefore removed from religious influence during all the time of their school hours, are often members of poor families where the parents are either not qualified to instruct their chil-

dren religiously or else are too occupied with the struggle for existence to find time to do so.

In many cases, therefore, the very children who get no religious instruction in school, receive as little at home; whereas the favored youngsters who are pupils in the parish schools, often come from families where Catholicity is in the atmosphere of the home circle and where their parents can take a hand themselves in teaching the children their religion. This makes the contrast all the more severe between the neglected state of one class and the twofold opportunity of the other.

It taxes all the resources of the teaching Sisters to take care of the children whom they have in their own schools. Everyone knows how overworked our teaching Sisters are and how constantly their duties multiply. In spite of this, not a few of them do go out on Sundays and holidays to teach catechism classes of public school children. But it would be unfair to expect that they should attempt to instruct all the two million who need such teaching, and despite their willingness they would find the task quite impossible.

THE CATHOLIC INSTRUCTION LEAGUES

But the Catholic lay folk are numerous enough to meet this need abundantly. Indeed they are already doing so in some places with extraordinary success. Catholic Instruction Leagues have been formed in various localities with a membership composed entirely of the laity; and many Sodalists, following a very ancient and honorable tradition of the Sodality, are taking their part in this most blessed work. In the large cities such as Chicago, New York, Pittsburgh, to mention only a few of a long list which would make up the roll of honor, Catechetical Instruction Leagues have been in existence for some time and

their fruit has been very great. They establish centers of instruction, sometimes in Catholic churches or schools, sometimes in halls, or even in private residences, and assign their members as teachers. They gather the public school children, either after school on week-days or on holidays, and give them systematic lessons, preparing them for their first confession and communion. Sometimes the first-communion class numbers two or three hundred, and most of these children would very likely never have made their first communion at all and would have altogether lacked Catholic instruction and influence if it were not for the self-sacrifice and devotedness of the teachers in the Catholic instruction centers.

CATECHETICAL SECTIONS IN SODALITIES

Where such organized Instruction Leagues exist, the Sodalists would do well to form in each Sodality a section for their aid, offering up prayers for the success of the work and sending as volunteers to the league those of their members who are competent to teach. These sections may each take over the management of one or several catechetical centers and they may, as a section, gather into their membership even non-Sodalists (as we have elsewhere explained) and may thus enlist them in the work of the league.

Sodalists who wish to know more about this work may address the Director of the Catholic Instruction League at 1076 West Roosevelt Road, Chicago, Illinois, or the diocesan office of the Catholic Instruction League, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. If Sodalists will be instrumental in establishing this work at some locality where hitherto it has not existed, their merit will surely be great and they will be doing a work admirably in accord with the traditions of the Sodality.

Of course, any Sodality which wishes to do so, may constitute itself, through a section, the local instruction league and may carry on the work of catechetical instruction independently. The first move is to secure the approval of the pastor in the locality where the center is to be established. Then, a certain number of volunteers must be found to conduct the classes. Finally, a suitable building must be secured where the classes may meet. A parish school is sometimes available after school hours, or a church hall can be engaged. The locality should be convenient for all the children so as to encourage regular attendance.

CATECHIZING IN THE COUNTRY

Different plans of organization must be used in different localities. In the crowded city parishes it is much easier to secure the children. They have not far to go and they may be reached and invited to come to the classes without much difficulty. But at first sight it might seem that this plan of catechetical instruction by the Sodalists would be less practical in the country districts, where nevertheless the need is sometimes great. In fact, the city and the country present a curious parallel. In the country, the children are so widely scattered that some are likely to be overlooked and to miss instruction. In the city, they are so crowded together that similarly some are likely to be altogether neglected merely because they are mingled with the crowd. The isolation and neglect of city children is sometimes strangely like that which comes to scattered dwellers in the country.

Nevertheless, with some modifications of method, catechetical instruction may be given by lay folk to the country child as well as to his city cousin. Because the distances are great, local centers should be

formed at convenient spots where smaller groups of children may congregate. The country parish may be broken up into neighborhoods, and in each convenient neighborhood a Catholic instruction class may be established. Even if only a few children are taken care of in each locality, by multiplying the classes the whole parish may be covered. If it is difficult to arrange all this, the great need of these children and the singular benefits which will come to them from careful instruction in their Faith should be a spur to effort.

DISTRICTING THE COUNTRY PARISH

Sometimes this may be done by zealous members of the country parish itself. In fact, the organization of country parishes is only beginning to receive the attention it deserves. It is not possible in the country to get everyone to assemble at the parish church as frequently as in the city. But if the parish is districted into convenient neighborhoods and if certain houses of the parishioners, which are centrally located to each district, are designated as rallying points, the catechetical instruction of the children can be carried on there by lay volunteers and a good many other Sodality activities can be promoted at the same centers.

In other cases, as the experience of the Pittsburgh league has shown, it is practicable to send volunteers from the city out into the country places, and these can gather groups of country children about them and form catechetical classes. In Pittsburgh and its vicinity this is a regular activity of the instruction league, and the carfare of the teachers who go out of town on Sundays to visit these isolated places is paid by the league.

THE BIRTH OF PARISHES

The results have been quite remarkable, and not a few parishes outside the city trace their origin to the activities of these teachers. At first they gather about them only a small group, perhaps, of Catholic children. Then the class widens in its membership. More and more Catholic families are discovered, their interest and zeal increase through the influence of the children until at last circumstances are favorable to the formation of a parish. A resident priest is sent to the people, and all of the activities of a parish commence. It is due to the pioneering zeal of the lay teachers of catechism that all this is brought about.

So much for the organized work of the Sodality in behalf of catechetical instruction. But besides its official and public initiatives for the teaching of catechism, either alone or in coöperation with the Catholic Instruction League, the catechetical section of the Sodality would do well to encourage its individual members also to personal efforts in teaching catechism.

VACATION OPPORTUNITIES

The vacation season presents an especially favorable time for this personal initiative. Those who go to the country for vacation will not seldom find a group of Catholic children uninstructed in their religion or who would at least be the better for some Catholic teaching. It makes a pleasant interlude to vacation pleasures to gather such a group of little ones and to teach them catechism. The hours may be conveniently arranged so that they will not interfere with other things; and the remembrance of these catechism lessons, given to a group of little ones in the shade

of some friendly tree or on the porch of a country residence, will long remain pleasantly in the memory both of the teacher and the taught.

Not long since, a touching incident brought this home to the present writer. An old man of nearly seventy, seeing our name in a periodical, wrote to inquire whether we were related to a benefactress of his youth. "Fifty years ago," he said, "there came to our country town to spend the summer, a lady who had the same name as yours, with her two young daughters. She was a most zealous woman, and during the summer she gathered a group of us children about her and taught us our religion. I have never forgotten her lessons and her zeal and kindness, and one of my great pleasures in my old age is still to read the prayer-book which she gave to me at the summer's end. May God bless that good woman! Fifty years have not dimmed in my memory the image of her zeal nor taken away from me the holy lessons she gave us children in the long ago."

VACATION SCHOOLS

There is one especial form of catechetical teaching which is particularly timely during the summer season. We have frequently recommended it to the attention of our Sodalists, and it is known as a vacation school. During vacation, a great many Catholic children who were safeguarded to some extent in the schoolroom during the rest of the year, are turned out upon the city streets with little opportunity to recreate themselves in healthful, seemly ways and with no protection against the physical and moral infections of the crowded and sultry slums where they live.

THE VACATION PROGRAM

The parish schools stand vacant during the summer, ready to harbor these children and give them a refuge and a place of instruction and recreation if only some zealous volunteers will come forward to conduct the activities of a vacation school. The program of such a school may be made very interesting to the children and at the same time profitable to their bodies and souls. The hours are brief, and the program is pleasantly varied. First may come the roll-call, a song or march and then a short period of catechetical instruction. After that, the story telling hour, manual work for the boys and sewing for the girls, games in the yard, etc., pass the time pleasantly, and the children are safeguarded for the sultry hours of the day. By a little careful planning the schedule of hours may be prepared so that some volunteers will each take one day of the week to manage the school, while others may be asked to give two hours a week to teaching and supervision. Thus the convenience of the teachers may be consulted and at the same time, as one relieves the other, the activities of the school continue uninterruptedly.

VACATION WORK FOR CATHOLIC STUDENTS

Fuller suggestions about vacation schools will be found in the book, *Social Organization in Parishes*. We recommend this as a fruitful and interesting activity to our Sodalists, and it is a work thoroughly in line with Sodality traditions. Another excellent plan for school Sodalities is to propose to their members in the higher classes to make a special effort during vacation to do some work in the way of catechetical instruction. Those who volunteer for this are formed into a catechetical section for vacation

work and given some practical instructions as to how to organize a catechetical class in their parish or town and how to give the lessons. Then, at the conclusion of vacation, all may be invited to prepare a report on "What I was able to do in honor of the Blessed Virgin in the way of Catechetical Instruction." The report will often be very interesting, and other activities may be included, for Catholic literature, the Missions, etc.

In one case in which we proposed this plan to the Sodalists in a Catholic college for girls, the report was sent to us at the end of vacation, summing up what had been actually accomplished by the pupils. No less than thirty-five students had established each one a catechism class in the small towns where she had spent the summer. Several others had begun clubs for girls, with the assistance of some of their older relatives, and had carried them on interestingly throughout vacation. Others, still, had helped the spread of Catholic literature by conducting church-door book racks and pamphlet cases.

THE PERSONAL TRAINING INVOLVED

Such work during vacation is of double advantage. The actual achievement of so many, working each one in his or her own locality, is not inconsiderable. But even better and more precious is the training which these students receive in personal self-sacrifice and in initiative. If, of their own accord, and without anyone's being near to urge them on and direct them, they carry through an unselfish resolve during the pleasure-fraught days of vacation, they may be trusted to continue, even after school, their zealous activities.

Add to this that, for almost anyone, catechetical instruction is an excellent way of becoming person-

ally better versed in Catholic teaching. There is no way of learning so effective as trying to teach the subject in question. The very effort to formulate definitely and clearly Catholic teaching and to adapt it to the understanding of children, as a capital means of making one's own comprehension of the Faith more clear and deep. Thus, like most other charitable activities, this catechetical work of the Sodalists blesses the giver almost more than the receiver. Its universal need, its singular blessedness, the advantages it brings to everyone, and its suitability for so many different classes of Sodalists should recommend it, no less than does the earnest exhortation of the rules, to all Directors, officers and members of fervent Sodalities.

CHAPTER XI

VISITING THE SICK

"THE chief of these works are the teaching of catechism, visiting the sick in hospitals and those confined to prison." (Rule 12.)

A SOLEMN COMMENDATION

To visit the sick is one of those corporal works of mercy especially commended by our Divine Lord in the tremendous sentence which, as He has told us, He will pronounce on Judgment Day. At that momentous hour when heaven and earth shall witness the triumph of the good and the condemnation of the wicked, He will say to those on His right hand, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, for . . . I was sick and in prison and you visited Me." Then, in answer to the question of the just, "Lord, when did we see Thee . . . sick or in prison and visited Thee?" He will reply, "Amen, I say unto you, as long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me."

In this singular commendation, this praise of the corporal works of mercy—to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to visit the sick and the imprisoned, to take in the stranger—Our Lord has evidently wished to emphasize the merit of deeds of mercy which we are likely to forget. He

has chosen also works which have a vast application and offer great opportunity for charity. There are always the hungry to be fed, the naked to be clothed, strangers to be received, and the sick and the imprisoned to be visited, so that everyone can find about him opportunities for these most meritorious works.

The Sodality has done well, therefore, from the beginning, in urging on its members the practice of visiting the sick. Sodalists are encouraged to take particular interest in the welfare of the sick, to work for their spiritual and bodily healing, to pray for them and to show in practical ways their sympathy and compassion for these wounded and suffering members of Christ.

A FAVORITE CHARITY OF THE SAINTS

Works of charity in behalf of the sick have always been a favorite activity of the saints. Some of them, like St. John of God, St. Camillus of Lellis, St. Vincent de Paul, have found their sanctification in caring for the distressed and miserable. But even those saints whose life work lay in other fields of effort, always showed themselves particularly kind and pitiful to those who were ill. St. Catherine of Siena was assiduous in attending those suffering from loathsome diseases; St. Ignatius had a great love for hospitals and delighted in performing menial services to the ill. He was most tender to the sick of his Community and used to go about in the night to visit them and see that they were comfortable and well provided. St. Elizabeth of Hungary made it her joy to nurse the afflicted. In a word, to enumerate all the saints who loved to visit the sick would be to run through the whole of the Church's calendar of the Blessed.

THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST HIMSELF

Numberless incidents in the stories of the saints manifest also how great a pleasure this particular good work gives to the merciful Heart of Christ. Sometimes, when the saints were ministering to disgusting wounds, conquering their natural repugnance for the love of Christ, their merciful Lord would suddenly heal these grievous afflictions. At other times, to their great consolation, these ministers of the sick would see the countenance of the sufferer suddenly change and assume the likeness of Christ, so that they felt vividly the truth of that sublime saying, "Whatsoever you do unto one of these My least brethren, you do it unto Me."

But the most eloquent and moving of all commendations is the example of Christ Himself, who through all His public life showed such immense pity and solicitude for those who were suffering from bodily evils. Brief as is the narrative of the Gospels, how many beautiful pictures it has left on our memory, of the compassionate Son of God, exercising upon all manner of persons His Divine power of healing.

Only a little part of His deeds are written in the Scriptures, yet how often it is recorded that He healed the sick. The lepers cry out to Him, and He bids them be clean. The woman troubled with an issue of blood touches the hem of His garment, and power goes out from Him and heals her. The man stricken with the palsy is bidden to take up his bed and walk, and forthwith he obeys; the man blind from his birth receives his sight and with courageous zeal bears witness to the holiness of his Healer in the very teeth of the scribes and Pharisees. Even the daughter of the Canaanite, sprung from an out-

cast people, to whom He had not been sent, receives of His mercy like the dogs which eat the crumbs that fall from the tables of the children.

HIS LIMITLESS COMPASSION

Christ's pity for the sick knew no bounds of time or place. When the crowds so pressed about Him that it was impossible to enter the house where He was through the door, they removed the roof and let down the sick man into the midst of the dwelling, and forthwith Christ healed him. He did not even look to the merits of the sick, for how often when He had healed the body, He found it necessary also to absolve the sinful soul with that sentence of spiritual healing, "Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee."

He left the same power of curing the physical ills of men to His apostles. When Peter walked through Jerusalem, they brought the sick to the roadside that as he passed his very shadow might fall on them and cure them. When a man, lame from his birth, begged alms of them at the gate of the temple, Peter cried out with mighty faith and assurance, "Silver and gold I have none, but what I have I give thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise and walk." And forthwith the lame man arose exulting, and he who had been lame from his mother's womb, leapt like the doe and praised the name of the Lord.

All these things should bring home to us the merit and loveliness of mercy to the sick, and they should induce our Sodalists, each one according to his opportunities, to engage in so excellent a work of mercy. The chance will very seldom be lacking, and the traditions of the Sodality will indicate many excellent methods of helping the sick.

SODALITY VISITORS OF THE SICK

The rules direct that there shall be in every Sodality as many visitors as are needful to comfort the sick Sodalists. "As the Director and Prefect cannot visit frequently such Sodalists as are ill, it will be necessary to name Visitors from among the most zealous and prudent, to coöperate in this pious duty. The Visitors should try to make their visits pleasant to the sick and by their spiritual conversation afford them help and consolation. Let them pray themselves for them, and, when the sickness becomes serious see that the same is done in the Sodality. In this case, let them immediately notify the Director, so that the sick may be fortified in time with the sacraments."

The duties of these visitors and the methods which they may employ are described somewhat in detail in Chapter 20, of the previous volume of this series, *Sodality Conferences.* Besides this, however (since charity though it begins at home, should never end there!) the Sodalists will do well to form a special section, where this is possible and practicable, for the purpose of visiting sick persons who are not Sodalists, either in their own homes or in the various hospitals of the city.

THE LONELINESS OF THE SICK

Anyone who has recently experienced what it means to be confined to bed during a long and serious illness, will appreciate what a charity it is to visit the sick. In health each one can take care of himself and has his own resources for amusement and recreation. A man or woman often finds the greatest satisfaction in work, and this keeps the faculties pleasantly occupied. Then, for leisure moments, one can go abroad or stay at home and read or occupy the

time in whatever manner is convenient. But when sickness comes and prostrates the sufferer, then the poor shut-in begins to realize how great a blessing is health, and to experience what an affliction is sickness. Sometimes for lonely hours the sick person is left to his own thoughts. If he is in the hospital, those about him are busy with necessary cares and cannot always give him the companionship he would desire. If he is at home, he may long for the sight of some unfamiliar faces or for news from the outside world from which he has been separated so suddenly and with whose interests he is still so concerned.

To visit such a one, to bring him some cheerful interest from outside his sick room, to offer him some little present, trifling enough in itself, but the expression of great kindness, to say a word to him about his spiritual interests, is a true and great charity. It does not involve any serious sacrifice on the part of those who give, but brings the receiver much comfort of mind. Even trifles become important to the sick man or woman. Indeed, to brighten up a dull day for the sick is no small charity. Their physical condition often depends very much on their mental attitude and sometimes a dose of cheerfulness is the best of medicine.

READING FOR THE SICK

Those who visit the sick may besides bring them good books to read, and should with tact and kindness make suggestions for their spiritual benefit. There are few times so favorable for helping a person spiritually as when that person is ill. To be laid flat on one's back, helpless and dependent, tends to soften the heart and humble the spirit. If the sickness is at all serious, it naturally brings with it solemn thoughts about death and judgment. Viewed from

the vantage point of the sick bed, the world seems less substantial and enduring and heaven more real and near than in the full flush of health and vigor. Many a sincere and fervent conversion has begun with a serious illness.

Tact, of course, and charity are always needful, but some good Catholics hesitate too much about speaking to their sick friends who are in need of spiritual encouragement. Often a few words rightly timed and full of charitable interest, will open the heart to the grace of God. Then, too, there are indirect ways of helping the sick spiritually. The lending of good books, suggestions about having a priest come and see the sick patient, the recommending of appealing devotions, all these are means of spiritual influence.

AN ACT OF PERFECT CONTRITION

Especially to remind the sick patient or to teach him, if need be, to make frequent acts of perfect love and contrition is a sublimely charitable service. An act of the pure love of God is an act of the love of God for His own sake because He is so good in Himself and so worthy of all our love. The motive for such an act of love of God must be not alone the fear of punishment nor hope of reward, but precisely that God is so good in Himself, so infinitely amiable, and therefore deserves all our love. Such love makes it easy for the sick person to make an act of perfect sorrow, which indeed is implied in perfect love. This perfect contrition consists in being sorry for one's sins not only because of the reward they have forfeited or the punishment they have deserved, but because they have offended God, who is so good in Himself and so worthy of all our love. Hence, perfect love is the motive for perfect contrition, and the one is inseparable from the other.

MOTIVES FOR PERFECT LOVE

One such act of perfect love and contrition is sufficient to lift the soul from the very depths of sin and to open to it the gates of heaven. Our Lord promised this when He said: "If any man love Me, My Father will love him, and We will come to him and will make Our abode with him." Such an act of the pure love of God includes the baptism of desire, and therefore will take the place of Baptism and Penance, providing that these cannot be administered. Thus, if the worst sinner on earth, unbaptized and loaded down both with original and actual mortal sins were, the instant before his death, to make one act of pure love and contrition, his soul would be saved. Moreover, the more intense this act of love, the more even the temporal punishment due to sin is remitted.

Nor is such an act difficult. Our hearts were created to love God. God is the most lovable of all beings, infinitely amiable in Himself and therefore most easy to love. Our effort therefore should be to persuade and help the sick man to realize God's lovableness. Everything proclaims His infinite beauty and power. His wonders are written on the whole face of the creation. The luster of the morning star, the peace of the starlit night, the splendor of the sunset, the fresh wonder of spring, the fruitful glory of summer, the richness of abundant autumn, even the still hush of snow-clad winter, speak constantly to us of the infinite beauty and power of God.

All the events of our lives are eloquent of His goodness and lovableness. Whatever blessings come to us are from His hands, and even the afflictions which He permits to fall on us are often blessings in disguise because they help us to free our hearts from earth and to atone for our sins. All these reflections

will help to arouse in the sick patient a pure and holy love of God and a deep sorrow for sin, because it offends God, Who is so good in Himself and so worthy of all our love. Sodalists who visit the sick will do well to keep these things in their hearts.

THE OPPORTUNITIES IN HOSPITALS

When we come to speak of the opportunities which hospitals offer for visiting the sick and benefiting them, we open up a still greater field than is offered to Sodalists who visit the sick in their own homes. Hospitals, nowadays, are becoming more and more centers of fruitful work not only for the direct restoration of health, but also for the readjustment of social conditions, for finding out and remedying abnormal conditions of the spirit, for doing social and religious work of a very effective kind.

It is coming to be realized more clearly that sickness is often only a phase in an extended cycle of misfortune. Much illness comes from the faults either of others or of the sick person himself. Faulty habits of living, bad environment, excesses of one kind or another are frequently responsible for the acute illnesses or chronic bad condition of patients in the hospital. Then, too, when one member of the family falls ill and has to come for hospital treatment it is quite often found that the rest of the family are also in need of some social readjustment. Sometimes there is ignorance of right ways of living. Sometimes the father or mother is sick and disabled, and so the whole family suffers. Sometimes the religious instruction of the family is discovered to be utterly inadequate. Sometimes those who visit the sick find reasons for believing that there is a want of good reading in the home or of right influences for the children.

IN NON-CATHOLIC HOSPITALS

True, the tendency is more and more toward establishing in each hospital a regular bureau of hospital social service which will systematically work for the improvement of these conditions. This is surely as it should be, and the social side of hospital work will assume more and more importance as time goes on. But in non-Catholic hospitals and institutions, this social work is almost entirely directed into non-religious lines, and so the Sodalists who visit such institutions will find much opportunity to supplement it by their Catholic activity. Then, too, even in Catholic hospitals, volunteers can often render valuable assistance to the trained and paid social workers.

Of course, where the hospital social service is organized, it will be quite easy for the Sodality section for visiting the sick to make inquiries at that bureau as to what they can do to coöperate and help. Where no such service exists, they may be the means, by their tactful suggestions, of having one established. These latter suggestions apply, of course, to mature Sodalists who are qualified to help in this phase of Sodality social work. But almost anyone can do something useful and meritorious to help the sick.

Thus, even little children can form a section for gathering Catholic magazines and papers and sending them out to the hospital. School Sodalities have been quite successful in interesting the students in this work. The boys and girls gather up the Catholic papers and magazines from their own homes and those of their neighbors and bring them to school. Then the Sodality section sorts them out into bundles, and their members carry them to the hospitals after school. A great number of such magazines can be used, both

in the Catholic hospitals and in the state and city institutions.

HOSPITAL ENTERTAINMENTS

Another form of true charity toward the convalescent patient and toward the hospital workers is to give entertainments in the hospital auditorium. Sometimes the sick-visiting section can originate a little program and thus help to cheer those of the patients who can come out of their rooms. When a parish play has been successfully given, or an opera or other entertainment staged, the same performance may be repeated in the hospital. This does not involve any extra practice. Sometimes, too, an entertainment may be gotten up and tickets sold for the benefit of some section of the nurses' Sodalities, to provide an abundance of good books for the hospital, or to supply something else which will be of benefit to the sick.

The Sodality section will help to keep its parish or school in touch with such opportunities. A great many little objects of use or luxury may also be furnished to the poorer patients. Tobacco, chocolate, candy, materials for manual work, are often welcome to the sick. Those Sodalists who know basket-making and other forms of manual exercise can come and teach the patients at stated times. In a word, almost any talent or accomplishment can find some exercise either for the sick or the convalescent patient or for the workers in the hospital.

These suggestions will, it is hoped, be useful to our Sodalists and encourage them to take up in our times an activity so much loved by the Sodalists of former days and so pleasing to God. May many a one of present-day Sodalists do fruitful work for our hospitals and their patients and deserve to hear those joyful words from the Son of Man, "Come, ye Blessed

of My Father, possess the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, because . . . I was sick, and you visited Me."

THE CATHOLIC HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

In close accord with the spirit of the Sodality in promoting the welfare of the sick, is the interest which all Sodalists should take in our Catholic hospitals and in the association which they have formed for the hospitals of the United States and Canada to promote their own efficiency in the spiritual and bodily care of their patients.

Already the zeal and industry of the hospital Sisterhoods have built up an extraordinary system of great institutions, which at the present writing number nearly 700, and take care every year of from five to six million patients. The mere physical equipment of these hospitals is valued at more than $300,000,000, and their current expenses must exceed $60,000,000 a year, or nearly $200,000 a day. A veritable army of devoted Sisters, nurses and doctors are occupied in caring for the sick, and a bewildering array of equipment, some of it very delicate and expensive, is kept constantly on hand for the welfare of the patient, for whom all this vast expenditure of human effort and solicitude is intended.

Our Sodalists, if they are interested and active, can help the Catholic hospitals in many ways. They can aid in creating public opinion favorable and grateful to these Catholic institutions which take care of so many afflicted persons. They can help to supply them with the means for the needed expansion of their buildings and equipment. By their prayers and good works they can encourage the hospital Sisters, the nurses and other workers. All this is in admirable

harmony with the ideals expressed by the Sodality rules.

Finally, special indulgences have been given by the Popes to encourage Sodality efforts for the sick. Each time a Sodalist visits the sick and each time he prays for the sick, he may gain an indulgence of seven years and seven quarantines. This grant of indulgences emphasizes the wish of the Holy Father that Sodalists shall visit and pray for the sick in accordance with the old and holy tradition of the Sodality.

CHAPTER XII

VISITING THE PRISONER

"THE chief of these works are the teaching of catechism, visiting the sick in hospitals and those confined to prison." (Rule 12.)

A FAVORITE SODALITY CHARITY

Last of the specific good works mentioned in the rules as having been favorites with the early Sodalities is this of visiting those confined to prison. It is a subject which deserves some emphasis and should receive more attention at the hands of mature Sodalists than it does at present. Of course, not everyone is suited to such work. It needs mature characters and those who are equipped by nature and training to help the prisoners without themselves suffering any detriment.

Still, there are a number of members of our Sodalities of men and women who might quite easily take up this work during leisure hours and do a great deal of good thereby. It was not without reason that Christ Our Lord mentioned this work specially among the corporal deeds of mercy which He will commend in an explicit way on the day of Judgment. "I was in prison and you visited Me. . . . Amen, I say unto you, as long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me."

The prison offers a greater opportunity than many realize, for reaching and influencing for the better

those whose lives have been warped and distorted through their own fault and frequently through the fault and neglect of others. No one is entirely bad by nature, and ignorance and bad bringing-up, the want of religious instruction, and moral training, are often the reasons why a man who might have made a good citizen under more favorable conditions, finds himself behind the bars of a jail. Prisoners are susceptible to various degrees of good influence, and the mature Sodalist who takes up the work of visiting the prisoners will be consoled by the evident fruit of his labors. An imprisoned man or woman is certainly a fellow mortal in great distress. The Sodalist who visits prison will compassionate them, remembering that it is not always the worst crimes which fall under the notice of the law.

A DEFINITE ORGANIZATION

In some cities there exists a definite group of Catholics who visit prisons. Such a circle, with at least a working organization, should be established everywhere and, of course, Sodality sections for visiting prisons should coöperate with the existing organization. Where a bureau of Catholic charities has been started in a city, individual Sodalists or sections of the Sodality may obtain information there about the best methods and the local regulations for visiting prisoners.

Those who are in prison are in some way comparable in their need to the patients in hospitals, though of course, the reason and manner of their restraint is very different. They will profit by frequent gifts of good books and magazines. The books may be handed over to the prison library, the magazines can be distributed to individual prisoners. Where the Prison Visitors' Section needs a quantity of magazines

for this purpose, they will do well to ask the school Sodalities to collect these so they may share in the merit of the work.

METHODS OF PRISON WORK

At certain hours visitors are welcome to prisons, and the accredited representatives of Sodalities may get leave to go from cell to cell, having a talk with each prisoner, finding out the Catholics, inducing them to go to confession and communion and supplying them with good literature. They may also undertake little acts of mercy toward the prisoner's family and exercise their zeal on the occasions for charity which come under their notice in the course of prison work.

They ought, of course, to exercise a great deal of prudence and to obey carefully the prison regulations, not to give the prisoners anything that is forbidden, and in every way to act discreetly. Before beginning work of this kind, it would be well for a committee of Sodalists to get in touch with some experienced worker in prisons, to accompany him or her as the case may be, on a few visits, and to ask advice and guidance which will help toward doing the work effectively. There is nothing so helpful in this matter as experience, and the fruits of it may be communicated from the adept to the tyro. A little advice in the beginning and a bit of practical demonstration will help to avoid mistakes.

THE CONSOLING RESULTS

Some Sodalities have long made visits to the prisons as part of their regular work and with very consoling results. Often the prisoners are most susceptible to kindness and good influences. Especially when their first offense has landed them in jail, they

may be in a very rueful and repentant mood. They have time for thought, and if the prison visitor can get hold of them, they may be got to make some very sincere resolutions of amendment, after an honest confession.

There are, of course, a certain number of hardened criminals who are extremely difficult subjects for conversion, but even they are human, and sometimes the most desperate cases may be reached by human kindness. Certainly the work brings one in contact with many phases of human nature, and its interest is therefore very great. Considering, too, the scant opportunities that many of these poor people have and the dreadful environment in which they grew up, the prison visitor will be little inclined to judge them severely. On the contrary, he will be disposed to thank God for his own opportunities and to make great allowance for prisoners who have had so much less teaching and good example than himself.

THE DISCHARGED PRISONER

Those prisoners who are discharged after the completion of their sentence, are sometimes in particular need of help. The man who comes out of jail has a stigma upon him which he must live down, and it is often very difficult for such poor fellows to reform. Their old associates are ready to help them and a life of crime offers them a chance of livelihood, though a dark and sinful one. If they find it impossible to get a position and there is no one to help them tide over the first hard days of struggle to lead a better life, they are likely to give up in despair and go back to their old haunts and their former evil ways. Systematic efforts are made in some places and should be exerted everywhere to greet the prisoner when he

comes from jail at the expiration of his sentence, and to help him along to better ways.

THE PLIGHT OF THE WOMAN PRISONER

This is no less necessary for the woman prisoner, especially for the wayward girl, who is often met at the door of the prison by her former evil associates and who may have even a harder struggle than the man to keep the good resolutions which she made in prison. Catholic wardens have sometimes told us almost in tears how little interest is shown and how slight effort is made to help Catholic women prisoners, while by contrast certain non-Catholic societies are very active to do everything possible for their co-religionists when they come out from prison. As a consequence, they declare, the Catholics come back again and again to serve a fresh sentence. While in prison they are constantly in correspondence with their former associates in evil. These evil geniuses watch for the last day of their sentence, are waiting at the very portals of the prison and clutch them and bear them off to their old haunts and bad associates; while the good Catholics of the locality remain in perfect indifference and do nothing to help them in an organized way.

The consequence is that, while in prison, coming under the influence of the chaplain and the prison visitors, they make fervent resolutions of amendment which are speedily broken as soon as they fall back into the clutches of their former associates. Sometimes one poor wretch will thus return to prison ten or twelve times and go through the whole miserable cycle of crime with intervals of repentance and resolutions of reform, only to be carried away again at the very door of the jail and to sink each time deeper and deeper into depravity.

Yet, no one should think that all such prisoners are incapable of amendment. Any worker in prison and in the court will be able to tell of astonishing instances of unexpected and complete reform, where some notorious criminal became a respectable citizen and the father or mother of a family. Even if such cases are not as frequent as we could wish, it is well worth while to toil to secure even one such repentance. Besides, the fact that a man or woman really repents of sins, confesses them with sorrow, and makes a resolution of amendment, cleanses the poor soul of the guilt at least of past offenses, and helps by just so much to secure the final mercy of God.

THE HELP OF THE PRISON CHAPLAIN

The chaplain of the prison will be of great help to the Sodalist visitors and will point out to them the best ways of giving aid to the prisoners and guard them against injudicious actions. The chaplain is thoroughly acquainted with conditions in that particular prison and, of course, he welcomes any influence which will help his charges spiritually. He can advise as to the best manner of spreading literature, can point out any cases which need special help of a kind which the Sodalists can give, and in many ways can guide and help their efforts.

THE CHARITY OF ENTERTAINMENT

The entertainment of prisoners is a decidedly helpful charity which the Sodalist can often exercise. This is now a regular feature of prison life. There is always an auditorium available, and the prison management, knowing the good effect of such amusements on prisoners, will be glad to have them given.

The entertainers need not come into any contact with the prisoners and, in fact, they need merely

arrive on time, give their entertainment and depart. Hence, while only mature and trustworthy Sodalists ought to do the work of visiting the prisons, the entertainers need not possess such sturdy characteristics.

As we remarked concerning the visits to the poor and the sick, so too, every time they visit the imprisoned, Sodalists may gain an indulgence of seven years and seven quarantines; and this indulgence, first granted by Pope Benedict XIV in 1748, was confirmed by Pope Leo XII in 1825, and by Pope Pius X in 1910. The giving of such indulgences indicates the special wish of the Holy Father to encourage these good works. Hence our Sodalists who are duly qualified for this work have not only the long tradition of the Sodality and the merit of the deed itself, but also the desire of three Popes to hearten them to take up and persevere in the visiting of prisoners.

CHAPTER XIII

WORK FOR THE YOUNG

"OUR Lady's Sodality aims at procuring the greatest possible holiness for its members and at extending to many others their salutary influence for the good of souls. It must therefore labor by various means to foster piety in the Sodalists and lead them to practice works of charity toward their neighbor . . . as the circumstances of our times may in different places require." (Rule 12.)

AN IMPERATIVE NEED OF THE DAY

We have omitted in the above rule some intermediate sentences so as to bring into opposition and contrast two important statements. The one is that the Sodality is by its rules required to interest its members in active works of charity. The other, that these works shall be such as the circumstances of our times require. Thus considered and emphasized, this rule forms a shining text for some practical considerations about the duty of our Sodalists as good Catholics to do their part in meeting that important problem of the day which concerns the adequate spiritual and social care of Catholic young folk. Few things are more needed in the Church of our times and few offer a wider sphere of zealous activity for Sodalities of young men and young women, or of married men or married women.

THE RESULTS OF INVESTIGATIONS

When we survey the present situation of our young folk, we must acutely regret that more has not been done already to meet this very great need. As is well known, large numbers of Catholic young men and young women have been drawn to the associate membership of the non-Catholic associations for young people. We may perhaps repeat briefly, for the benefit of those who have not as yet become acquainted with them, the results of our investigations some years ago concerning the Catholic membership in these non-Catholic associations, the Y. M. C. A. and the Y. W. C. A.

Becoming very deeply interested in the situation of our Catholic young folk, we first applied to the secretaries of these associations and asked them what proportion of their members were Catholics. They replied that they had no general statistics, but that we might apply to the secretaries of the local centers of the Y. M. C. A. and the Y. W. C. A. and ask them to search through their card indexes and report the number of Catholics. From this we could make averages, they declared, and estimate the total number of Catholics in the organizations.

CATHOLICS IN THE Y. M. C. A.

Beginning with the Y. M. C. A. we followed out this suggestion and received courteous answers from a number of large city centers which reported each one on its local proportion of Catholics. We then made estimates and averages and came to the conclusion that out of 625,000 total membership in the Y. M. C. A., 150,000 were Catholic young men. This meant that the Catholics are the largest single denom-

ination of the Y. M. C. A., that they constitute about one-fifth of the total membership and one-half of what is called the associate membership. We were then told that they are not allowed to hold office nor to vote, and were referred to a test called the Portland test, which declared, in brief, that the Y. M. C. A., as a Christian organization, should keep its affairs in the hands of those who believe in and love Christ the Saviour and who manifest this Christian spirit by remaining members of an Evangelical Church.

An Evangelical Church was defined for this purpose to be one which holds the Bible as its sole rule of faith. Thus, in effect, Christianity is made the test of voting membership and those who are not Evangelical Protestants are classed among the non-Christians. It is upon these terms that so many of our Catholic young men have entered the Y. M. C. A. In an interview with the leading secretary of the Y. M. C. A., he assured us of the correctness of these conclusions and declared that the Y. M. C. A. is a Protestant organization and will remain so, that it cannot properly take care of Catholic young men in a religious way, and that we should have our own association for our own young folk. All this was clear enough, but it was interesting to hear these things from the lips of a Y. M. C. A. secretary.

The interview was printed and widely circulated. One of the members of the Knights of Columbus who conducted the negotiations with the War Department, informed us that it was this printed interview which had much to do with obtaining the permission of the Secretary of War for the Knights of Columbus to enter the camps and care for the Catholic young men. The correctness of these estimates has, so far as we know, never been questioned.

CATHOLICS IN THE Y. W. C. A.

A subsequent study was made of the Catholic membership of the Y. W. C. A. and it was found, by correspondence and by making averages, that out of a total membership of 350,000 at that time, some 40,000 were Catholics. This may have been an underestimate, as Catholic girls who enter the Y. W. C. A. are not always willing to declare their religious affiliation.

In another place we have dwelt at some length on these investigations and on the methods and organizations of both these non-Catholic associations. It will suffice now to call attention to the very great need of Catholic effort in the same direction. If 150,000 of our young men and 40,000 of our young women enter these associations, as they do, to secure the physical exercise, the cheap rooms and board, the sociability and instruction to be had there, we may justly suppose that at least three times that number are in more or less serious need of similar facilities under Catholic auspices. In other words, our Sodalists and others who have the interest of the Church at heart, should certainly feel impelled to do everything in their power to promote welfare work for Catholic young people.

THE MIGRATION OF YOUNG FOLK

The reason of this need is not far to seek. An increasingly large number of Catholic young people are leaving their homes in the country or in smaller towns to seek their fortunes in the great cities. Almost as many are leaving the city where they were born and the influences and the restraints of their Catholic homes to go to other places to find employment. Thus, we have a large moving population of young people who come to strange places without

friends or ties and often find no provision made by Catholics to introduce them into Catholic companionship and to encourage them to the faithful practice of their religion.

LODGINGS FOR GIRLS WHO WORK

Recent partial surveys made among young women who work, show that from ten to thirty-five per cent of them live away from their own home, and of these many are wretchedly housed in cheap boarding houses where five or six girls sleep in one room. Out of five hundred such places, which have been investigated, only fifty were found to have parlors where the girls could entertain their friends. Thus, many young people are quite without normal means for friendly sociableness. They must meet their friends on street corners, in dance halls, or public places, because they have no home worthy the name. All this and much more which we could relate if space allowed, goes to show how acute is the need for more effective provision for Catholic sociability. Since, then, Sodalists are exhorted by their rule to practice the works of charity toward their neighbor which the circumstances of our times require, they certainly should do their best to help provide some better means of sociability and amusement for their less favored youthful co-religionists.

THE MANY POOR WHO ARE CATHOLICS

This is peculiarly a Catholic problem because so many of the under-advantaged young people are Catholics. We have had occasion to mention more than once the report made years ago by a social investigator who traveled far and wide through this country in the guise of an unskilled laboring man to study the condition of the very poor. In his detailed report

he declared that with one exception the religious denominations have lost all hold on them. This one exception is the Catholic Church. The poor who are Catholics, he said, seem to carry their faith in the marrow of their bones; and no matter how wretched they are, they still remain Catholics. Add to this, that a very great number of Catholics in this country are either immigrants themselves or the children of immigrants. In either case they are likely to be at some disadvantage, economically and socially.

Again, even our well-to-do young people often find themselves at a loss for Catholic companionship. They can find abundant company in public clubs and gathering places, but they do not know where to look for friends and companions of their own Faith. Everyone knows, too, who has studied social conditions, how many children there are who are growing up in congested quarters of our large cities without adequate means of sociability, deprived of Catholic influences, whose school hours are passed in the public schools and whose playtime is spent on the city streets. Many non-Catholic societies are working among them, and energetic efforts are being made to organize the Catholic children under Catholic auspices. This Catholic movement also should greatly appeal to the zeal of our Sodalists.

THE STUDY OF LOCAL CONDITIONS

Various means have been suggested for dealing with the problems of work for our Catholic young people, and local conditions must determine to some extent what methods shall be used. The Sodalists in every parish who are mature and competent to undertake the work, should organize a committee to make a study of the parish needs for sociability and friend-

liness among the young and should, with the approval and coöoperation of the pastor, take measures to provide whatever is required.

CITY AND NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS

Nor must the interest of the Sodalists cease at the parish boundary. They should be anxious to promote according to their ability the erection of a Catholic center for the whole city and of neighborhood centers for the convenience of Catholic young folk wherever they are needed. The Catholic centers, according to the plans which we have developed and explained in another place, should serve for all the central and general needs of Catholic associations, organizations, sociability, exercise, recreation, and instruction. The neighborhood centers, which, like the civic center, should be self-supporting, will minister to the neighborhood needs of Catholic young folk, some being devoted to providing board and lodging for young men and others for young women.

One of the first cares of the Sodality, however, should be to supply adequate and complete facilities to the young people of the parish itself along recreational and social lines as well as for instruction and physical exercise. Some parishes have succeeded in erecting and managing successful parish halls. Where a single parish cannot manage this, it may be done by the coöperation of two or three, the parish hall being put at the intersection of the parishes. At present, the too great separation between parishes tends to discourage such coöperation. Yet the tendency is always toward greater breadth of view and a more generous coöperation between parishes, and such an enterprise would be a great step in that desired direction.

WELCOMING THE NEWCOMER

At any event, the Sodality, through its section for sociability, should manage to bring the young people together frequently in pleasant social entertainments. They should make a study of the local situation and its possibilities and by successes and failures will come to learn the most effective means in their own parish. A group of the Sodalists should be detailed to watch out for newcomers in the parish, to find out whether they are Catholics, and introduce them to Catholic circles. The stranger should receive a specially cordial welcome and should be given every opportunity to join in the activities of the parish.

For the want of such organization, there is a sad lack of welcome for the newcomer in many parishes. Not long ago we received a letter from a recent convert to the Faith, a young woman who is full of enthusiasm and fervor for the spiritual beauty and truth of the Church. But she has a sad tale to tell of her experience of Catholic sociability. She joined the Sodality in her parish, she wrote, and attended the meetings faithfully. But, oh, what coldness, what lack of sociability, what icy stares for a greeting! She said that at the Sodality meetings she was obliged to keep her eyes on the manual or fix them on the face of the Director while he was giving his instruction, for fear that she might catch a glimpse of her fellow Sodalists and be chilled to the heart at the icy unfriendliness of their looks.

No doubt this young convert exaggerated the situation. She was accustomed of course to the organized friendliness of Protestant churches which welcomes the stranger with demonstrative courtesy. Nevertheless, is there not among Catholics a distinct lack of that thoughtful courtesy and kindness toward the

newcomer which would be so sweet a charity and so great an encouragement to the stranger within our gates? This will never be remedied effectively until our Sodalities or some other organizations take methodical measures to promote a systematic kindness toward the newcomer.

A PLAN FOR THE SOCIAL LIFE OF THE PARISH

The Sodalist can likewise do excellent work in promoting the social life of the parish, and this is a real and definite charity. Young people have as true a need for recreation as for food and drink, and to give it to them under safe auspices is to preserve them from many evil influences.

With a little ingenuity the Sociability Section can provide entertainments at no great cost. One plan which succeeded admirably in a city parish consisted in forming a social club of an equal number of young men and young women who met in rotation at various homes in the parish, each mother giving the use of her home for club meeting once a year. Meetings were held every two weeks and began with an hour of various amusements. Some sang, some played cards or games, others chatted together. At about a quarter of nine, light refreshments were served, followed by dancing until eleven. Four of the most reliable of the matrons of the parish acted as supervisors and saw that all was seemly and that the young folks departed precisely at the stroke of eleven. Besides furnishing much innocent amusement to the members, such a club is likely to be fruitful in Catholic marriages. How futile it is merely to warn the young against mixed marriages and then to give them no opportunity of meeting nice Catholic young people.

A plan like this could be used even in a large parish by dividing the parish into neighborhoods and

having as many clubs as there are neighborhoods. Similar means of informal sociability can easily be devised. Once there is a section in the Sodality whose sole business it is to organize such a gathering as an act of zeal and in honor of the Blessed Virgin, the work may be expected to go on increasing. Surely, few things could be more suitable for the zeal of Sodalists, who are exhorted to suit their good works to "the circumstances of our times."

CHAPTER XIV

PARTICULAR RULES FOR THE SODALITY

" . . . providing they do not alter the present Common Rules, they can make any particular rules, statutes and decrees which they think seasonable and prudent. They can also modify and entirely change what they have decreed, without being obliged in any case to get or even ask the opinion or consent of the Sodalists." (Rule 16.)

THE FITNESS OF LOCAL RULES

The rule from which we have quoted above is directed to the priests in charge of Jesuit Sodalities, and it calls attention to the power they have of making special rules in addition to the Common Rules governing their Sodality. But the passage is interesting because it points to the possibility and suitableness of special rules for any Sodality whose Directors officers and members consider it wise to provide them. The Common Rules of 1910 are, as we have several times explained, binding of themselves on Sodalities in Jesuit houses and churches. They offer, however, an epitome of the true spirit and purpose of Sodalities affiliated to the Head Sodality at Rome, and so they are nowadays usually adopted, with the approval of the Ordinary, by all Sodalities which apply for affiliation. These Common Rules cover quite well the ordinary needs of Sodalities, and they offer a

program of Sodality work which can be made to suit almost any local needs. Still, the individual Sodality may wish to provide for its members some special rules, and this is quite in accord with the general spirit and traditions of the Sodality.

THE COMPOSITION OF LOCAL RULES

It would seem that the wisest way to go about the composition of these rules is first to have a tentative series of regulations drawn up and then to propose them for the approval of the Sodalists. In this way they can be tested and discussed before being adopted, and will be more sure of observance in proportion as they suit local circumstances and have local approval. Of course, useless rules should be avoided, and nothing should be resolved on which is beyond the capacity of the Sodalists. Common sense and prudence ought to govern the composition of any extra statutes which are to be imposed on the Sodality.

MATTER FOR LOCAL RULES

If the Sodality is in a non-Jesuit parish or institution, the local rules should be submitted to the Ordinary for his approval, since it is he who has jurisdiction over such Sodalities, who creates them by his authority and who is responsible for their government. Some of the points which these special rules may cover are, for example, the detailed organization and management of the sections and academies, the manner of conducting the business meeting, the method of holding elections, the conduct of the special enterprises of the Sodality, and, in general, any detail not decided by the Common Rules and which it is thought well to make definite by special statutes.

Thus, the rules leave the Director free either to

appoint the officers or let them be elected, and the method of election is not determined. Where it is expedient to do so, the special statutes may fix the method of choosing so that in successive years the Sodalists may know how their officers are going to be selected. So, also, the term of office may be fixed, the duties of the officers may be more precisely specified, and any details may be determined which are judged to be of importance for the success of the Sodality. The business meeting, at which the prefect or president of the Sodality presides, and which should be conducted according to the rules of parliamentary law, may also be governed by special statutes. Some manual of parliamentary law may be designated as the official standard for the business meeting, and the regular order of exercises may be prescribed.

It is very important that meetings be conducted with definiteness, method and dispatch, as a failure in these points wearies out the Sodalists and discourages their attendance. If special rules govern the meeting, then the prefect of the Sodality will have a guide to follow and will be able to go from point to point with a pleasing brevity and swiftness instead of wondering what is to come next. In fact, even where this is not made a special subject of statute, some definite order of exercises should be observed. But if this order of exercises is printed as a part of the special rules of the Sodality, the prefect will always have it at hand during meetings, and each new prefect will know where to look for it.

THE MANAGEMENT OF SECTIONS AND ACADEMIES

As to the organization and management of the sections and academies, these form a very proper subject of special statutes, as they are dealt with only very summarily in the Common Rules. In fact, it

would be difficult to enter into particulars about them because the Common Rules were made for the Sodalities of the whole world, and local conditions enter so largely into the question of specific organization. Hence, the Director and officers, in consultation with their Sodalists, may well fix a definite method of organization and procedure for the sections and academies.

The number of sections and academies may also be determined, always understanding that the number mentioned is the minimum and that new ones may be organized at any time when occasion requires. If certain definite sections and academies are specified in the statutes, this will be an encouragement to the officers to ask a report of each section at every meeting.

OTHER LOCAL PROVISIONS

Various other local provisions may be useful to fix the time of weekly meetings, the day of monthly communion, and similar points. All such things may be regulated by local statute, because the Sodalists can bind themselves as they like. Useless or encumbering provisions should, however, be omitted from the special statutes, and nothing included but what is positively helpful to promote Sodality activities and the individual welfare of the members.

So long as no provision of the special statutes is in conflict with the general rules, or in excess of the power of the Sodalists to legislate for themselves, they may be passed by a majority vote. The Sodality, like any other society, is ruled by the majority (always subject, of course, to ecclesiastical authority), and hence can regulate its affairs by a majority vote within the limits of its own authority.

It sometimes gives Sodalists a greater interest in

the Sodality to make these special regulations. When they have once been consulted and have voted for this or that provision, they feel a more personal share in the Sodality work and are better disposed to carry out what they have definitely decided on. The final sanction of special rules in Jesuit Sodalities is given by the Director.

So, too, it is well from time to time to have a revision of the special statutes and bring them up to date. A committee may be appointed for this purpose who will carefully go over the old statutes, suggest the ones to be discontinued because they have grown obsolete or useless, and propose new ones which appear to be useful to improve the state of the Sodality. These may then be brought up for discussion, and the revision may be carried out by a majority vote of the Sodalists.

THE WISDOM OF CONSULTATION

It is true that the Director by himself can decree these changes if he is so disposed (and if he has authority from the Ordinary in the case of non-Jesuit Sodalities), but though this is the law in the matter, still, prudence suggests that the Sodalists be consulted and allowed to take part in the framing of their own special statutes. It should always be remembered, too, that none of the rules of the Sodality bind under pain of sin and no one is a member of the Sodality except through his own good will. Hence, the observance of any regulations that are made depends upon the good disposition of the Sodalists. It stands to reason that this is best secured by giving them as large a share as possible in the determination of their own affairs.

The very existence of special statutes shows that a laudable interest has been taken in the work of the

Sodality, because the effort involved in planning and drawing up such regulations is an earnest of real concern for the Sodality's success. This question, then, merits some attention at the hands of the Director and officers, and they may find the very work of preparing and approving special statutes a means of stimulating the interest of their Sodalists and of making more definite and practical the activities of the local Sodality.

The last of all the rules, Article 10, Rule 69, speaks of the manner in which rules of Jesuit Sodalities must be approved. It says that if rules somewhat different from the Common Rules of the Sodality are desired for Sodalities in Jesuit houses and parishes, they must be proposed to the Very Reverend Father General himself. This refers to rules which introduce some modification into the Common Rules. This is clear because the following sentence declares that local rules which are added on to the Common Rules but are not contrary to them must, if they are meant to be permanent, be submitted to the Superior or the Provincial of the mission for his approval.

In the case of Sodalities not in Jesuit houses or parishes, they should be laid before the Ordinary of the place for his approval. Where they introduce some change into the Common Rules, they should also be sent on for the approval of the Father General when the application is made to have the Sodality affiliated.

LOCAL CUSTOMS AND REGULATIONS

These regulations hardly refer, however, to what one might call the by-laws of the Sodality; that is, those regulations of matters of detail, which are merely intended to serve as a guide for the officers and which do not involve any change in the Common

Rules. Since these are not rules in the proper sense, but rather local customs and regulations, it would appear that each Sodality is free to adopt them for itself and change them by a majority vote of its membership, just as any society can establish its by-laws when not in conflict with the general constitution.

Finally, where a rule affects the indulgences of the Sodality, no one is free to change or modify it in such a way as to deprive the Sodalists of their vested rights to the indulgences. Thus, the Director and officers will be very careful about fulfilling all the requisites which affect the gaining of indulgences.

CHAPTER XV

BEFORE THE FINAL RECEPTION

"THERE should be a probation of not less than two months. During this time the candidate is obliged to fulfill without exception all the duties which the Sodality imposes on its members. Those who come from another Sodality can be admitted immediately if they present a document signed by the Director of the Sodality from which they come, bearing testimony to their good character and ordinary attendance at the exercises of that Sodality. Those who, though Sodalists before, do not come directly from another Sodality will undergo a probation longer or shorter as the Director thinks best." (Rule 25.)

THE NEED OF PROBATION

The precautions which this rule suggests for determining the worthiness of candidates to be admitted to the Sodality are really an indication of the true nature of the Sodality itself. The Sodality of the Blessed Virgin, as the first rule declares, is not merely a devotional exercise, nor a group of pious persons who meet from time to time to recite the Office and hear instructions, but it is a religious body established by the Church, with its own rights and privileges, its rules and traditions, customs and spirit, and it has a very definite place and standing in the great plan of the Church for the sanctification of her members.

Therefore, the Sodality is required by its rules to be particular in selecting its members, and it has set up definite safeguards and provisions for the purpose of instructing all those who are to be admitted and for testing their sincerity and earnestness before the final reception. This is only carrying out the often-mentioned analogy suggested by that devoted Sodalist St. Francis de Sales, between the Sodality and a Religious Order or Congregation. In every Religious Order or Congregation, whose members devote themselves to Almighty God by the personal consecration of the vows, there is required a time of probation called the time of postulancy and of novitiate, wherein those who apply for admission are required to give proof of their sincere intention to observe the rules of the society they wish to enter, and where they are given an opportunity of testing their own worthiness and their fitness for what they propose to undertake.

Needless to say, this period of probation for Sodalists is not nearly so long nor so strict as that required for a religious profession, because the Sodality is not nearly so exacting in its demands upon its members, nor has membership in the Sodality anything like the sanction or permanence or strict obligations of the religious vows. Still, there is a very real and helpful analogy between the two probations, and a consideration of this resemblance may be a help to Sodalists to realize, what is so easily forgotten, the high requirements of their membership and the earnestness with which they should keep in mind and try to carry out the Sodality rules and customs.

TWO MONTHS THE MINIMUM

In the passage which we have quoted from the rules, the time and manner of the probation of appli-

cants to be Sodalists is stated: "Before the final reception there should be a probation of not less than two months." This is the minimum. One could scarcely expect, in a shorter time, really to test the worthiness of a candidate for the Sodality. If one cannot remain faithful, be entirely punctual and regular in attendance at meetings and attend to the instructions of the Director and of the instructor of candidates about rules and customs of the Sodality for two months, then one certainly has not the requisite fervor and perseverance to be a worthy Sodalist. This time, however, is the minimum; it may be wise in some cases to have a more extended time of probation so as thoroughly to test the earnest resolve of applicants to observe the rules of the Sodality and properly to instruct them in the Sodality ideals and spirit.

INSTRUCTION MOST IMPORTANT

What are to be the active exercises of this time of probation? The most important thing to be done for the candidates is thoroughly to teach them the customs and spirit of the Sodality and to give them a good understanding of the rules. This is indicated in Rule 57: "The duty of the Instructor of Candidates is to direct the candidates and instruct them in the customs and spirit of the Sodality, during the time of probation which precedes their reception into the Sodality." One is justified in thinking that the neglect of this preliminary instruction and the failure carefully to inform the candidates as to the "customs and spirit" of the organization they are about to enter, is one of the great causes of the falling away of Sodalists from their fervor, and is injurious to the true spirit of the son and daughter of the Blessed Virgin.

THE ANALOGY WITH RELIGIOUS NOVITIATE

To go back to our analogy of the Sodality with the religious life: what is it that gives Religious Orders their zeal and character, their distinctive spirit and the power to withstand the changes of times and manners? Whence comes their uniformity and persistence in the most diverse conditions and changing times? This vitality and individuality of Religious Orders and Congregations comes, under the providence of God, in great measure from the training given the members during their novitiate. The whole atmosphere of the novitiate is made to convey the character, spirit and tradition of the Religious Order or Congregation, the novices are instructed in the customs, the rules, the methods of working, the traditions received from the holy past, the lives of prominent members, their writings, particular exercises of religion, the methods of meditation, prayer, characteristic devotions, ways of working, and undertakings proper to the Society or Religious Congregation. All these things are brought home to the novices by frequent instruction, practice, example, until their varying characters, previous education, and the variety of dispositions are harmonized, molded, and engraved with the character, spirit, and customs of the religious body they are to enter. This training in the novitiate is of supreme importance, coming at a time when the zeal and fervor of the applicants for admission is at the highest. It forms and develops the individual's whole character and disposition, so that the miscellaneous crowd of subjects who enter the novitiate, differing in a thousand ways and with hardly any point in common except their resolution to enter and persevere, come forth from that period of training with an universal ideal, common traditions, a family spirit

which cements them together and joins them to the religious body in which they are about to consecrate themselves for life.

IMPRINTING THE SODALITY IDEAL

In a very similar way this precious and extremely important time of probation of the Sodality should be definitely directed toward taking hold of the Sodalist, powerfully imprinting on his mind and heart the definite and characteristic ideals of the Sodality, giving him that lively devotion, that chivalrous loyalty to the Blessed Virgin which is the distinguishing mark of the Sodalist, and stirring up his zeal to work energetically in her honor and for God's glory, for his own personal sanctification and for the neighbor and the Church. At the same time it should give him as much information as is possible concerning the Sodality traditions, history, spirit, and the accepted ways of Sodality work.

As regards the particular details of the time of candidacy, these should be arranged with a view to the convenience of the prospective Sodalists and of the instructor. A definite order should be adopted. Those who are candidates should be gotten together once or twice a week, and the instructor of candidates, especially trained for this work by the Director, should read over the rules with them, indicate how each rule is observed in this particular Sodality, point out just what activities of the Sodality come under the rule, and indicate any special customs or practices of the Sodality which supplement or change the regular order. Those rules which deal with the particular duties of the Sodalist ought to be dwelt on with special care. The practices of personal piety recommended should be explained and suggestions given for carrying them out. Great stress should be laid in partic-

ular on the exercises in common. The Sodalist should be taught to look on attendance at meeting as a practice from which he should dispense himself only with serious reason. Then something should be said in explanation of the devotions practiced at meetings and privately, so that the Sodalists may find personal fervor in the Office and whatever other prayers it is customary to say, because these have been competently explained to them. All this may seem too difficult of observance, but good work is seldom easy. We are here suggesting ideals to be aimed at, not strict requirements.

SOME IMPORTANT DETAILS

The general communion should be specially insisted upon. The practice of attendance at the Sodality retreat should be emphasized and its importance dwelt on. An instruction should be given on the primary and secondary patrons of the Sodality, and the candidates should be told of the special celebrations, feast days, and Sodality events which they can expect throughout the year. A particularly careful explanation should be made of the work of the sections and academies, and where a number of these exist in the Sodality the purpose or scope of each should be dealt with fully, and the candidates should be informed as to how they must proceed in volunteering to become members of these special groups. Each one should be urged to take part in at least several of these Sodality activities. The instructor of candidates should also explain the government of the Sodality, and a word should be said about the duties of the officers and their respective departments of work, so that the Sodalists will understand to whom to go with suggestions or offers of aid.

DUTIES COMMON TO ALL SODALISTS

Article 6 of the rules, which treats of the duties common to all the Sodalists, ought to be gone over carefully and in great detail, since it develops and explains the first rule of the Sodality. The duty of the Sodalists to lead especially edifying lives as exemplary Catholics, the practices of piety suggested to the Sodalists, morning prayers, the quarter of an hour of meditation, the daily hearing of Mass and receiving communion, the saying of the rosary, examination of conscience—all these should be explained in a practical way as they occur in the rules. The keeping of good company, the usefulness of having a spiritual director, may also be dwelt on by the instructor of candidates. While this official can do a great deal, his instructions should be supplemented by the Director of the Sodality himself, who will explain the practice of general confession, the reception of frequent or daily communion, devotion to the Blessed Virgin and those other points of the rules where instruction by a priest is expedient. Needless to say, the instructor of candidates should be carefully selected and, in the beginning, should be carefully trained by the Director. He should be an exemplary Sodalist and possess personal enthusiasm and fervor which he can communicate to others.

This may seem to be requiring a good deal; and, indeed, it will involve no little work on the part of the Instructor and the Director. But it is extremely worth while to go to great pains to have a fervent, exemplary Sodality.

CHAPTER XVI

"ONCE A SODALIST, ALWAYS A SODALIST"

"SODALISTS once duly received into the Sodality remain members of it always, unless they give it up of their own accord or are dismissed as unworthy." (Rule 30.)

This rule has been epitomized in the saying, "Once a Sodalist, always a Sodalist." Once admitted duly into a Sodality which has been validly erected in any church or public chapel and aggregated to the Sodality in Rome, one shares in the privileges and partakes in the benefits of the Sodality for life, unless he voluntarily resigns his membership or is expelled for misconduct. In other words, of its own nature membership in the Sodality is perpetual and persists indefinitely unless terminated by some definite action on our own part or on the part of another who acts with due authority.

CONTINUED SHARE IN PRIVILEGES AND INDULGENCES

This should be a great consolation for those who truly love the Sodality and appreciate the benefits of membership in this intimate and special family of the Blessed Mother of God. It happens sometimes that one who has been a very fervent member of the Sodality in a school or parish and who has tried in everything to live up to the high requirements of the rules and spirit of Sodalists finds it necessary to give

up outward participation in the works of the organization. Perhaps it becomes necessary to move to a locality where no Sodality exists. Perhaps, as frequently happens to devoted mothers of families, one's cares and duties prevent one from taking the same active part in the work as of old. Perhaps illness or travel or engrossing work of one kind or another makes it next to impossible to attend meetings and go to communion at the appointed times with one's fellow Sodalists. None of these things prevents us from retaining our full membership in the Sodality, and we still share in the privileges and profit by the indulgences granted to all Sodalists, providing that we perform privately the good works to which the indulgences are attached.

Of course, there is loss and disadvantage in not being able to come to meetings and communions. One forfeits the special indulgences attached to the performance of these particular duties of the Sodalist. Worse still, one misses the benefit of the instructions given by the Director of the Sodality, the good example of fellow members, the opportunities of joining in the common work of the sections. But it is a consolation to remember that one is still in fact a full member of that holy society. "Once a Sodalist, always a Sodalist," and however removed we are in body from the Sodality to which we belong, we still remain in spirit one with its life and good works.

THE REQUISITES FOR VALID RECEPTION

Note, however, that there are some significant points in the wording of this rule. Thus, for example, it declares that "once *duly* received into a Sodality" one remains a member always. What is absolutely required for being *duly* received as a Sodalist, in the sense of the rule? First, it is necessary that the

Sodality itself should be duly, that is validly, established by proper authority; next, that (for the obtaining of the privileges and indulgences) it be duly aggregated to the head Sodality at Rome; then, that the Director be validly appointed by due authority; and, finally, that the Director give some external sign that he grants one's application for membership in the Sodality. When these conditions are fulfilled—and it is the duty of the Director to see that they are properly attended to—then one is *duly* received into the Sodality and remains a member of it for life.

THE LOSS OF MEMBERSHIP

This rule goes on to say that, once duly received, Sodalists remain members of the Sodality always, "unless they give it up of their own accord or are dismissed as unworthy." Now, it seldom happens that anyone gives up of his own accord membership in the Sodality. One may unfortunately become remiss in one's attendance at meetings and cease any active participation in the work of the Sodality, and so practically cease to derive benefit from one's membership. But even in this case one still may return and take up again the work of the Sodality without being admitted again, unless, of course, one has meantime been actually expelled for non-attendance at meetings and communions or for any other reason. Actually resigning, however, or formally giving up one's membership in the Sodality is, we think, a rare occurrence and it would seem to argue in the Sodalist scant sense and less fervor.

There is, though, a way in which a Sodalist may practically give up his membership that merits special notice here. It is said in Rule 47 of the Common Rules: "If a Sodalist is to be away, temporarily or for good, from the place of the Sodality, let him notify

the Father Director, who will, if necessary, send him an official letter signed by himself, and the prefect, testifying that he is a Sodalist and is worthy of admission as such into other Sodalities. *He must, however, know that all Sodalists away for a year or more* from the place of their Sodality and settling in a place from which they cannot attend its meetings *are obliged, in order to gain the indulgences, to enter in their new home a Sodality corresponding to their state of life,* unless the Director of such Sodality refuses them admission or there happens some other hindrance of whose sufficiency the Director of their former Sodality shall be judge." [Italics ours.] From the provisions of this rule it is clear that anyone who neglects to join the Sodality in his new place of residence within the year, forfeits at least the privilege of sharing in the indulgences granted to Sodalists. This is a clause of the rules to be kept in mind by members of Sodalities of nurses and teachers in particular, when they change their residence to a place where is to be found another center of the nurses' or the teachers' Sodality.

CHAPTER XVII

THE OBLIGATION OF THE RULES

"THOUGH the Rules of the Sodality do not of themselves bind under pain of either mortal or venial sin, but leave in each matter that degree of obligation which exists by divine or ecclesiastical law, still the Sodalists should have great respect for the Rules, and endeavor to fulfill them faithfully and exactly, as they voluntarily accepted them on the day of their reception and as they will find in them the necessary and efficacious means to attain the end of the Sodality." (Rule 32.)

NOT BINDING UNDER PAIN OF SIN

It was a very prudent thing on the part of the framers of the rules of the Sodality to make this declaration that the rules are not binding under pain of sin. For the spirit of the Sodality is that of a loving eagerness to do something more than one's mere duty, to lead a more than ordinarily generous and faithful life in honor of the Blessed Virgin. Hence, the rules are a guide and an indication to direct and regulate the zeal and ardor of the Sodalists in their work for personal holiness and the help of the neighbor and the Church, and are not commands or vows binding under pain of sin. Then, again, the directions of the rules are rather difficult of observance, and, taken together, they outline a rule of life that approaches to perfection. Ordinary mortals, there-

fore, would hesitate very reasonably about entering a society that made such lofty demands on its members, if it made them under pain of sin.

A WRONGFUL NEGLECT OF THE RULES

Clearly, then, it would be a serious mistake to think that the rules are binding under pain of sin. But it is a mistake that very few indeed are in any danger of falling into. The opposite error is far more common, and it is as wrong in its way as the other. Too many, even of the members and Directors of the Sodality, look on the rules as imposing on them no obligations at all. They are scarcely aware that rules exist. They have never read nor considered them, and they go about the work of the Sodality in a haphazard way, without ever regarding these authoritative suggestions and directions approved by the Church.

Obviously they lose by this, and in several ways. The rules are a crystallization of the spirit of the Sodality as it has developed and expressed itself during many generations of faithful service and loving imitation of the Mother of God. Every organization has its own traditions and methods, and in the enlightened conservation and development of these it finds its strength and its individual life. To depart radically from them would be to belong to the body only in name. It is so with the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin. In more than three hundred years of vigorous life in many lands and under diverse circumstances it has developed its own methods and its own traditions. Like every living organism, it adapts these methods to the needs of the time. But there is a real continuity and an organic growth in the Sodality that expresses itself in a very definite spirit and in clear traditions, which have been carefully crystallized in

the Common Rules. To neglect the rules, then, is to miss the spirit of the Sodality.

A REASON FOR ILL-SUCCESS

Here is the reason for the ill-success of many present-day Sodalities. They are cut off from the source of inspiration and life that awaits them in the rules. They have no methods nor traditions. They are, indeed, Sodalities in name only, and they sometimes do irreparable harm to the fair fame of the Sodality because they show forth little of its supernatural efficacy and none of its charitable activity. When the members and the Director of a Sodality feel discouraged over the scant success of their efforts and wonder why more interest is not shown in the meetings and why it is so hard to get new members, they should ask themselves what heed they have been paying to the rules. If they are not even familiar with their recommendations, and do not use the methods and principles which they inculcate, then it is no great wonder that the work lags and fails.

SOME UNCHANGEABLE RULES

Again, the rules suggest a number of good works that belong to the age-long program of the Sodality. To these good works the Holy Fathers of Christendom have from time to time attached precious indulgences. One who knows the rules and the indulgences of the Sodality is encouraged thereby to exercise himself in the works proposed, and is reminded of his vocation as a Sodalist. According to the legislation of the Church the bishops and the General of the Society of Jesus, who have wide jurisdiction in Sodality matters and can change many of the other rules, have no power to alter or omit the rules which prescribe

works that have been specially indulgenced by the Holy See in favor of the Sodalist.

It is surely highly unbecoming, to say the least, for a Director or a member of the Sodality to annul in practice what even the bishop cannot lawfully make void or change.

A VOLUNTARY ACCEPTANCE

Finally, there is the significant reminder in the passage we have quoted concerning the rules, that the Sodalists should endeavor to fulfill the rules faithfully because "*they have voluntarily accepted them on the day of their reception.*" When one enters an organization he must in prudence know what he is taking on himself by the act. This is especially true where there is a question of entering a religious society like the Sodality. So the candidate for admission to the Sodality is to be instructed in the rules, and must spend several months as a candidate before he is admitted to the Sodality, both that he may maturely consider whether he means to be a good Sodalist, and that the Sodality may judge whether he is fit to be admitted. An instructor of candidates is to be provided, one of the major officers of the Sodality, whose special duty it is to see that the candidates are properly taught the spirit and customs of the Sodality. This of course supposes that the candidate is to be thoroughly instructed in the rules wherein these customs and this spirit are authoritatively and clearly set forth.

THE DIRECTOR'S KNOWLEDGE OF RULES

But it is the Director of the Sodality in particular who should study the rules most carefully and make himself familiar with them. In accepting the office and responsibility of Director he has undertaken to

explain and encourage the observance of the rules. His position in regard to the rules is somewhat different from that of the members of the Sodality. For those who join the Sodality may be said to have a right to receive from the Director its true spirit and methods, and to be trained in the right notion of the Sodality and instructed in its rules. Obviously, no Director can give such instruction unless he himself has a thorough knowledge of the rules, and so one may say that there is an obligation of charity and fidelity on the Director to know and understand the rules of the Sodality.

In the foregoing remarks we refer, as has been explained, to the revised edition of the Common Rules which was issued in 1910 by the then Father General of the Society of Jesus. These rules have superseded all former editions as the authoritative exposition of the Sodality spirit. They contain all that is essential in the older rules, but they add much further illustration, and emphasize in a very special and stirring way the duty of the Sodalist to work, not only for personal holiness, but also for the help of the neighbor and the defense of the Church.

There is a surprising lack of knowledge of these rules, even among our Sodalities themselves. No Sodalist should be ignorant of them, and all should have a copy of their own to which they can turn for information as to the methods of the Sodality and for inspiration to fervor and active zeal. Manuals which contain the old form of the rules should be discarded, and every effort should be used to make known and to observe the new and authentic form.

If this is no light task, its accomplishment will bring no little good. For, the observance of the rules, according as the circumstances of time and place

allow, will quicken interest, arouse endeavor, and stir up the spirit of supernatural zeal. It will, in the words of the rule, *"supply both to Directors and to Sodalists the necessary and efficacious means to attain the end of the Sodality."*

CHAPTER XVIII

THE OBSERVANCE OF THE RULES

" . . . they will find in them [the rules] the necessary and efficacious means to attain the end of the Sodality." (Rule 32.)

The spirit of the Sodality, its purposes, and the methods by which it seeks to attain them are indicated clearly enough in the Common Rules of 1910. It is quite true, of course, that the rules merely indicate, they do not always develop in detail, the outlines of the Sodalist's life. The great diversity of persons and characters included in the Sodality would make such particularization difficult. It is enough for the rules to express the spirit and to point out in general the methods to be used. Then the intelligent Director and officers may carry out the details of the program thus sketched out.

THE SODALITY RULE OF LIFE

Looking at the rules in general, we see that the Sodality offers its members a rule of life. It outlines for them a career of earnest and definite striving for personal holiness and the help of their neighbor. It is intended to serve as a school for the lay apostolate, a training place where the leaders, so much needed in our Catholic body, may be instructed, inspired, taught methods and perseverance and then sent out to do whatever work their neighbor and the Church most need.

The Sodality is a very definite organization with very distinct purposes and characteristic methods. (We are speaking, of course, always of those Sodalities which are affiliated to the *Prima Primaria* of the Roman College, and which share its traditions and are governed by the spirit of its rules.) Those who complain that the Sodality is indefinite, that it has no set purpose, that it varies endlessly in its organization, show by the very remark that they are not sufficiently familiar either with its present rules or with the history and traditions of which these rules are the latest development.

THE BLIGHT OF IGNORANCE

Indeed one of the circumstances which has most injured the Sodality and most impeded its development is the fact that so many even of the officers and Directors of Sodalities have never taken the trouble really to become acquainted with its rules and traditions. They seem to presume that they know enough about the Sodality because in their childhood they were members of a school Sodality (which may or may not have been rightly organized or even affiliated to the Head Sodality at Rome), and so they keep the vague, inadequate idea of the Sodality as a mildly devotional society with no particular purpose except to hold an occasional meeting and communion. At the beginning of their responsibility for the Sodality, they may perhaps feel that they are to study up in detail its rules and traditions, but they conveniently postpone the duty from day to day until finally they neglect it altogether. So we may find persons who have been in charge of affiliated Sodalities for years and who actually have never once read over the rules and considered each suggestion contained therein in

the light of the opportunities and needs of their own Sodalists.

"THE NECESSARY AND EFFICACIOUS MEANS"

To such persons the phrase we have quoted from Rule 32 should serve as a moral stimulus. "They will find in the rules the necessary and efficacious means to attain the end of the Sodality." The authority of the Church given to the Father General of the Society of Jesus to frame rules for the Sodality, was exercised by him in the publication of these Common Rules of 1910. In his decree, issued on the feast of the Immaculate Conception of that year, he cites the Constitution of the Sovereign Pontiff, Gregory XIII, *Omnipotentis Dei,* "dated the 15th day of September, 1584, and enlarged and confirmed by Sixtus V, Clement VIII, Gregory XV, Benedict XIV, Clement XIII, Leo XII, and Leo XIII, whereby we are empowered to make rules for Sodalities of Our Lady, and, as circumstances and times demand, to change, correct and reform the same."

By virtue of these very ample faculties and powers, the Father General declares, "we approve and sanction the following rules. . . . We declare these to be the Common Rules for the use of all Sodalities of Our Lady erected in houses or churches of the Society of Jesus." It is customary, as is said elsewhere, for each new Sodality affiliated to the Head Sodality at Rome to adopt these Common Rules as its own, with the approval of the Ordinary, and even where this is not done, the Common Rules of 1910, though they bind of themselves only the Sodalities in Jesuit houses and churches or those others which have formally adopted them, still contain in themselves the ideals for which all affiliated Sodalities should strive. "The nature and aim, the manner of proceeding and

the practices of the Sodality are excellently shown in them so that they may well serve as a mirror for all Sodalities even outside of Jesuit houses and churches." These words are taken from a footnote in the ordinary edition of the rules, and they quite well express the value of the rules as a source of information and inspiration to all affiliated Sodalities.

A REASON FOR LACK OF LIFE

It is a commonplace to say that societies approved by the Church and whose rules have the sanction of ecclesiastical authority, can hardly expect to thrive and achieve their purpose unless they obey at least the spirit of their rules. It is true that exceptions and dispensations from particular and unessential provisions of the rules may often be useful and necessary, but a society which is careless of the very spirit of its rules and takes no pains to study and observe them can hardly expect to receive those copious graces which are necessary for the success of any supernatural enterprise.

For this reason a Sodality whose Directors, officers and members are ignorant and careless of the rules can hardly expect to thrive as a Sodality. It may show some life and activity as a social club, or even it may get along as a mere devotional confraternity; but neither of these things constitute a real Sodality, as anyone may see who gives even passing attention to the first of the Common Rules. Hence, it is no wonder that so many Sodalities bemoan their lack of life and struggle along half moribund, not knowing what to do nor whither they are going. It would be easy, with a little industry, for those in charge of the Sodalities in question, to look into the provisions of the rules and find out what should be the spirit of their society and what its definite purpose. But

from year to year they ignore the ready means of reviving their Sodality contained in the rules and refuse, at least in practice, to "find in them the necessary and efficacious means to attain the end of the Sodality."

AN APPEALING PROGRAM

Yet these rules in themselves, though their language may not be very elegant nor their expressions always very lucid, still sketch out a very beautiful and appealing program. They make it clear that the purpose of the Sodality is one of the most charming and amiable to be conceived, one which should appeal to the heart of every fervent Catholic. The very first rule declares that it is the purpose of the Sodality to use devotion to the Blessed Virgin as a means to make each member of the Sodality a specially fervent Catholic and to stir up in his heart precisely such an interior fervor of the Catholic life and zeal as will of its own efficacy overflow in good works, according to the Sodalist's state of life. And this, first for his own sanctification and perfection, and then no less for the saving and sanctification of those about him, and for the defense of the Church against the attacks of her enemies, and the spreading of the Faith to the four corners of the earth.

This program so definite, so practical and comprehensive constitutes, so to say, the platform of the Sodality. It is essential and should be carried out by affiliated Sodalities everywhere, no matter what the age, condition or capacities of their members. The Sodality, therefore, which is faithfully working to use devotion to the Blessed Virgin as a means of training each of its members to that personal, interior fervor of Catholic life which will overflow in good works, is accomplishing its purpose. The Sodality,

on the contrary, which is not working toward this end, is failing of its mission. All the other rules give instructions and suggestions which tend to the carrying out of this great purpose.

It is true that some of these rules are of much less importance than others, some by their very wording, are intended to be only suggestions. Hence it behooves the prudent Director and officers to make a study of the rules and to decide what is imperative for their Sodality and what may be changed or omitted without losing the Sodality spirit.

It is clear that devotion to the Blessed Virgin must be the mainspring of all the Sodality activities. ". . . She must be acknowledged by them all as primary patroness." (Rule 3.) "The Blessed Virgin is the principal patroness of the Sodality of Our Lady. Hence, the Sodality should make profession of a particular devotion to her and strive to imitate her splendid virtues, place all confidence in her, and urge one another on to love and serve her with filial devotedness." (Rule 40.)

THE EXERCISES IN COMMON

Article 2 speaks of the exercises in common, and directs that the Sodality should meet at least once a week. Necessity knows no law, and if these meetings are really impossible, the Sodality should try and make up by its fervor in other things what it lacks in this regard. Still, if in any way possible, meetings should be held weekly. We have spoken in another place of the excellent reasons for this.

As to the regular exercises of the meetings, much latitude is left and the Director and officers can very well adapt their means to the wants and needs of the members. The wording of the rule is, "the regular exercises of these meetings are usually as follows."

Hence, the order of exercises given is not imperative, and may be changed for good reason. Those Directors and officers who worry about the Little Office of the Immaculate Conception might easily see on reading the rule that they are in no way bound to recite it. Besides, when the rule says "singing at Matins or Vespers the Little Office of Our Lady," it means the Little Office in the breviary, which consists of psalms and antiphons. It adds, "the recitation or singing of some other Office of Our Lady may be substituted." Clearly also other prayers to the Blessed Virgin may be substituted for the Office if some solid reason justifies the change. The general communion of the Sodality is to take place once a month and this is imperative. So is the yearly retreat, as one gathers from the wording of the rule. The solemn celebration of the titular feasts which are recommended so earnestly, may be managed almost anywhere, and special indulgences for the Sodalists and others are attached to them.

THE FOSTERING OF PIETY AND GOOD WORKS

Article 3 of the rules emphasizes the necessity that the Sodality shall "labor by various means to foster piety in the Sodalists and lead them to practice works of charity toward their neighbor." This again is imperative and therefore every Sodalist must consider that the encouragement of the Sodalists to works of charity toward the neighbor is as much a part of the Sodality as the cultivation of personal piety. Certain good works are especially recommended; the teaching of catechism, visiting the sick in hospitals and those confined to prison, but "others like these, as circumstances of our times and in different places require," are also recommended to the Sodality.

Whatever good works then are needed and prac-

ticable to the Sodalist, should form part of the program of the Sodality. Rule 13 recommends the formation of sections or committees "each with an organization and life of its own, though always subject to the governing authority of the Sodality," to accomplish these good works; and Rule 14 recalls the tradition of the Sodality of organizing academies to encourage "the young to practice themselves in scientific, literary, artistic or economic exercises, to help them on in their studies or professions and to secure for them under the direction of competent persons correct views on questions connected with Catholic faith and morals." How timely these means of organization are and how needed at this present epoch of the Church's history, any experienced pastor can bear witness.

THE DUTIES OF OFFICERS

With regard to the government of the Sodality, the rules have much to say, and their provisions ought to be scanned attentively by those in charge of affiliated Sodalities. Thus, the importance and duties of the officers are strongly emphasized, and twenty-three of the rules, some of them long and detailed, deal with the method of government through the officers. The prefect is to be "the right hand of the Director." He, as well as all other officers of the council, "should be very diligent in executing the duties of their office, and should, when necessary, have recourse to the Father Director to report to him on their administration, to consult him on doubts and difficulties arising, to receive new instructions from him and so to make themselves, as they should, the faithful coadjutors of his authority in governing the Sodalities."

How emphatically these phrases indicate the im-

portance to be given the officers in the government of the Sodality. It is they who are to administer its affairs and to carry on the work. They are to have recourse to the Father Director when necessary to report to him and consult with him; but it is they who are to have ordinary management of Sodality affairs. How different this attitude is from that of some Directors who treat the Sodalists as though they were children, insist on settling everything themselves, and make themselves so much the center of all activities that the officers lose interest and the Sodality loses life. In the rules the duties of each officer are described and there is such a division of labor that no one will be overburdened. The Director should direct, encourage, stimulate the officers to their work, but should leave to them the management of the activities entrusted to them. Were these rules observed in their spirit, we should see far more successes and fewer failures in Sodality administration. Directors would not then be inclined to go so much to one extreme or the other, either taking everything on themselves and smothering initiative among the Sodalists, or neglecting the Sodality altogether and giving the officers no training or encouragement.

ADMISSION OF MEMBERS

The provisions of the rules on the admission and dismissal of members are also important and interesting. Candidates should be "persons of irreproachable conduct and have the age, position of life, profession, etc., which are requisite in the Sodality which they seek to enter, and they must be resolved upon being faithful in the observance of the rule." This is a very simple norm for the acceptance of members. They must be resolved upon being faithful "in the observance of the spirit of the rules." If they have

this determination, they may be admitted. If they have not, they should be excluded, but it should be noted that this resolution does not have to extend to all the details suggested in the rules. The essential thing is that candidates should wish to practice special devotion to the Blessed Virgin and through this devotion to become exemplary Catholics, active for their own sanctification and for the defense and spread of the Church. This answers the difficulty that some pastors seem to feel because their people cannot observe all the recommendations of the rule. Even if an individual were frequently prevented from coming to meetings, if he should live his life in the spirit of the Sodality, he would be eligible for membership.

THE TIME OF CANDIDACY

Another recommendation is that candidates should be given at least two months' probation to test their earnestness and sincerity, during which they should be obliged to fulfill without exception all the duties which the Sodality imposes on its members. In this connection it is well to recall that among the officers should be an instructor of candidates, who will carefully inform those who are on probation as Sodalists, as to the spirit and duties which they are undertaking. The rules also give a ceremony of admission, though this is merely suggested. In fact, as Rule 28 very significantly declares, "the Director of the Sodality can in particular cases dispense with the formalities prescribed for reception. It is in fact, absolutely speaking, sufficient for the validity of this act that one who has power to receive and he who is to be received should manifest their formal will in the matter by some outward sign."

DISMISSAL

Very little is said of dismissal, but this too is an important subject for the Director's consideration. "Any Sodalist or Candidate shall be dismissed from the Sodality," says Rule 31, "who seriously fails in the general duties of a good Catholic or in the particular duties imposed in the rules." This standard, together with the requisites for admission which we have already quoted, sufficiently solves the difficulty proposed by so many Directors as to whether few or many members shall be admitted to the Sodality. If there are many in the parish or institution who are able and willing to live up to the spirit of the rule, there will be many to admit to the Sodality. If there are only a few, these few will suffice. The reasonable method is to try to take in all who will be good Sodalists, and to exclude or dismiss those who take no interest or are merely dead timber. Judicious pruning, neither excessive nor defective, is as useful for the life of the Sodality as it is for the strength and vigor of a tree. Moreover, this duty of dismissal belongs to the Director alone. "But he shall consult the council beforehand in cases of special difficulty." (Rule 31.)

PERSONAL PIETY AND EFFORT

Article 6 of the rules speaks interestingly of the recommendations to be made to Sodalists in regard to their personal piety and active work for their neighbor and the Church. They are to be first and foremost exemplary Catholics and obedient children of the Church. They are to practice exercises of piety, and certain ones are specifically recommended in Rule 34. Among these are "at least a quarter of an hour of mental prayer," the hearing of Mass daily, the recital

of the holy rosary or some Office of Our Lady, and the practice of daily examination of conscience. Not all Sodalists can accomplish all these recommendations, but those who can should be encouraged by their Director and officers to do so. Sodalists are also to avoid all bad company, bad reading and plays, and all occasions of evil or of scandal. They should choose a fixed confessor to be their spiritual director and should approach the sacraments as frequently as he advises. "They should consider as addressed in a special manner to them the invitation of frequent and daily communion which the Holy See has made to all the faithful. . . ." (Rule 39.)

"All should be extremely careful to attend at the appointed time the general meetings of the Sodality, ordinary or extraordinary." This is a provision of great importance because attendance at Sodality meetings is a special sign of devotion to the Blessed Virgin and therefore not lightly to be dispensed with. Sodalists who cannot be present at a meeting should send in a written excuse or come personally to report the cause of their absence. Great emphasis is laid on the desirableness of getting all the Sodalists to take part in one or more sections or committees of the Sodality, which are established to foster piety and good works. "Where circumstances permit," Rule 42 continues, "it would be good to make this of obligation." The particular rules of each Sodality will determine what obligations each Sodalist is under to be present at the academy or section.

"Let all be careful," says Rule 43, "as far as they can to exercise their zeal even in private, in spiritual and corporal works of mercy and especially by drawing to the Sodality those whom they deem fit." Sodalists are to obey promptly the orders and counsels of the Director in all that pertains to the life

of the Sodality; and "in the same way let them give due honor and obedience to the prefect and other officers of the council and also the minor officers in what belongs to each one's charge." (Rule 44.) This provision emphasizes the honor and esteem which ought to be paid to the officers of the Sodality, a provision too often neglected, we repeat, to the great harm of Sodality activities.

THE MUTUAL CHARITY OF SODALISTS

The brotherly love and charity which the Sodalists owe to each other, their prayer for the needs of the Sodality and the Sodalists, especially of the sick, their private and public petitions for the repose of the deceased Sodalists form the subject of Rule 45, which directs that the Sodalists should recite in common for each deceased member "the Office of the Dead or other prayers and have Holy Mass said, thus securing for him the indulgence of a privileged altar." It should be remembered in this regard that "Mass said for a Sodalist departed in any place and by any priest enjoys the privilege of a Privileged Altar."

The sometimes vexed question of Sodality dues is treated in Rule 46, which says, "let each one contribute for the expense of the Sodality, either a voluntary alms such as his means permit or a small fixed sum determined by custom." Experience seems to show, however, that the practice of taking up a collection is much simpler and less vexatious than the regular demanding of dues.

CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE DIRECTOR

The last rule of this Article 6 emphasizes the fact that absent Sodalists should write occasionally to the Director or prefect and should try to carry out the pious practices of the Sodality and live a fervent

Sodality life wherever they may be. It also repeats the very important provision made by Pope Pius X on the 10th of May, 1910, that "a Sodalist who is absent for a year or more from the place of his Sodality, and settles in another place, from which he cannot attend the meetings, is obliged—in order to gain the indulgences—to enter a Sodality suitable to his circumstances in the place of his new residence, unless the Director of such Sodality refuses him admission, or there is some other legitimate impediment as to which the Director of his former Sodality shall be the judge."

This same rule, 47, also directs that Sodalists who are going to be away temporarily or for good from the place of the Sodality, shall receive from the Director "an official letter, signed by himself and the prefect, testifying that he is a Sodalist and is worthy of admission as such to other Sodalities." This provision may be met by the use of a membership card which is printed at Sodality headquarters, and can be given to every Sodalist to keep in his prayer-book and to serve as evidence of his Sodality membership.

THE INTERCOMMUNICATION OF SODALITIES

The next but last article, IX, of the rules, is worthy of special study and consideration by present-day Directors. It speaks of the intercommunication of Sodalities, and declares that "in order to secure more easily and certainly the end of each Sodality or of several of the same class, or, finally, of all Sodalities, congresses of Sodality Directors, especially of the same country, are to be recommended." In Europe we found that this provision of the rules was being far better attended to than here. Yet, what a benefit it would be if the Sodality Directors of different

regions and of the whole nation would come together periodically in congresses to discuss the present state of the Sodalities and what can be done to advance them, to compare experiences and to encourage each other to greater activity! To these congresses, of course, Sodalist delegates should also be invited, and some of the meetings could be held by them jointly with the Directors, others by themselves alone while the Directors conferred separately. "These congresses," the rule continues, "should direct all their deliberations and functions to the good of souls and to solid piety, should not spend money on the mere splendor of the festival, and should strive to produce practical and permanent results," all of which are very reasonable and obvious recommendations.

THE SODALITY MAGAZINE

The next means of promoting the intercommunication of Sodalities is the publication of a Sodality periodical. "Commendable also," says Rule 67, "is the practice both of publishing and of reading Sodality periodicals, which treat of Sodality matters and foster a Sodality spirit in their readers." Observe that these periodicals are directed by the rules both to deal with Sodality subjects and to foster the Sodality spirit. But this supposes that they will have a circle of Sodality readers who will be interested enough in Sodality matters to support the magazine financially. Here as elsewhere the demand will readily create the supply, and if the various magazines which are published in behalf of Sodalities in various places do not print more Sodality news, one very good reason is that the Sodality secretaries and Directors will not take the trouble to send in the interesting items they might furnish, and that the Sodalists as a group are not sufficiently interested

to demand such Sodality news, and to support generously the magazine which furnishes it.

UNIONS OF SODALITIES

Finally, attention is called in the rules to the help afforded to Sodality spirit by the formation of Sodality unions, both among Sodalities of the same class throughout the country and of Sodalities in general. These latter unions may be both local and national. The wording of the rule is as follows: "It also helps to the greater glory of God and the honor of our Blessed Mother that where it can be done, Sodalities of the same class or country should form a permanent league among themselves with a common council."

This plan of organization is very ancient in the Sodality, but it is nevertheless extremely well adapted to modern needs. In a number of localities in the United States we have during the last few years assisted in the organization of Sodality unions, and some of these continue to flourish and to do excellent work both for the parishes individually and for the whole city. Thus, in Pittsburgh the Sodality union has, through the activities of its Directors and others, promoted the organization of Sodalities in many parishes, and it brings the Sodalists together periodically for city-wide meetings and celebrations. There also exists a Sodality social service, whose interesting activities it would take long to enumerate.

In Washington and Baltimore also the Sodality union has increased and flourished from a small seed which we helped to plant there some years ago until with the active encouragement of their Archbishop, the Sodalists at Washington are supporting schools in the counties of Maryland and gathering each year thousands of dollars for the purpose, while the union

at Baltimore is conducting an important community house and has the credit of having established the Casa Regina Home for Self-Supporting Women. So, too, at Altoona, Pennsylvania, the Sodality Union conducts a Sodality Home for Girls. It would indeed take long to enumerate all the activities,* actual and possible, of the unions of Sodalities.

The last rule of all declares that local rules may be made for a Sodality, but in that case they should be proposed to the ecclesiastical superior in case they depart from the Common Rules. This provision also stands to reason and springs from the nature of the case.

We have dealt with all these rules much more fully in the volumes, *Social Organization in Parishes,* and *Sodality Conferences,* as well as in the present pages, but it will be helpful and interesting to the busy Director of Sodalities to have before him this rapid survey. To give a glance over the whole field of the rules, as we have done, brings out the variety of suggestions they offer and the solutions they can give to many practical problems of Sodality organization and management.

CONFERENCES ON THE RULES

It is true that the rules are not all ideal, and that they do not enter into all the details which might be desired. But they breathe the spirit of the Sodality, and if carefully studied will give inspiration both to the Director and the Sodalists. Conferences given to Sodalities may very properly turn on one or another point in the rules, and the more these are studied and understood, the better the spirit and life of the Sodality will become.

* For details, see *Social Organization in Parishes,* passim.

A careful consideration of the wording of the rules will also reveal that some of the more difficult provisions are merely suggestive. It is not the intention of the framers of the rules that everything should be taken as of equal importance. Some points indeed are emphasized in such a way as to be urged upon all Sodalities. But most of the exercises proposed are left to the discretion of the Director and the officers to adapt to local possibilities and needs. The Sodality offers an extraordinarily flexible and effective means of organization. Our zealous pastors will come more and more to realize and employ its very blessed possibilities.

CHAPTER XIX

THE HOME LIFE OF THE SODALIST

"NEVER being ashamed to act, in private and public life, as faithful and obedient children of this their holy Mother." (Rule 33.)

A LIFE-LONG CONSECRATION

The influence of the Sodality should extend far beyond the times of meeting and the moments when the Sodalists assemble together for their monthly Communion. Rightly understood, membership in a Sodality is a lifelong consecration, an offering up of one's self to the service of the holy Mother of God all during life and indeed throughout eternity. "I firmly purpose," says the candidate to the Blessed Virgin, when reciting the Act of Consecration to the Blessed Virgin before admission into the Sodality, "to serve thee evermore myself and to do what I can that all may render faithful service to thee." Such a resolve should have its influence on every relation of life and bear fruit not only at the public meetings of the Sodality, but in the privacy of the home, in the affairs of business, even during recreation and relaxation; in a word, whenever and wherever the Sodalist is called upon to show himself a worthy child and servant of the Mother of God.

The more deeply this consecration is realized, the more influence it will have on all the thoughts and actions of life. Those, therefore, who enter the Sodal-

ity, should be deeply impressed with the facts that they have devoted themselves in a special way to the Virgin Mother, have pledged themselves to imitate her virtues and have put themselves in the way of receiving to an unusual degree her favors and intercession with her divine Son.

In the very true sense, the Sodality is what we make it. If membership is taken lightly, if the Sodalists fail to appreciate the meaning of their act of consecration, their membership in the Sodality will mean very little to them and will have very little influence on their lives. It is the part of the officers and Director of the Sodality so to impress on the members the meaning of their personal consecration that they will endeavor to live out in their every action that holy dedication of themselves and all they possess to the Mother of God.

INCREASING THE HOLINESS OF HOME

Especially should the Sodalists realize that membership in the Sodality ought to bring with it a great deepening and strengthening of the holiness of their life at home. Home life is of immense importance in the whole scheme of society. The members of a Catholic family should reproduce in their daily life, so far as the weakness of poor human nature will allow them, the sanctity and charity of the household of Nazareth. The Blessed Mother is the Queen of the Sodalists' home as she was of that humble cottage where dwelt the Word Incarnate, and her influence should permeate and sanctify the atmosphere of the one home as it did that of the other.

The home of the Sodalists should abound in beautiful representations of the Virgin Mother. Art is so supremely rich in beautiful Madonnas and these may be had so cheaply in excellent reproductions that

there is no excuse why any home, however humble, should not be enriched with lovely pictures of the Mother of God. These pictures insensibly raise the mind and heart to her whom they portray. They make her a living presence in the home and bring nearer her motherly tenderness and compassion upon all her children

PICTURES IN THE HOME

How often, when the heart is sad or anxious, do not the eyes rest half consciously upon the picture of Mary while the heart is stirred to prayer and devotion by the sight of that heavenly countenance full of maiden's purity and mother's love! Those Sodalists who fail to provide in their homes an abundance of pictures of the Madonna and of other religious subjects do an injustice to themselves and to the other occupants of their home. Let us emphasize, too, the truth that these pictures should be artistically beautiful as well as devotional. Only the most excellent in art as well as in piety is worthy of the Mother of God.

Nor should there be wanting in the Sodalist's home a great plenty of excellent books, some of which, at least, should sing the praises of the Queen of Heaven. Good reading even more than good pictures is a necessity for the truly Catholic household, and it must sadden the heart of the Virgin Mother to see even the homes of her Sodalists profaned with unseemly books and magazines, while the books which treat of her and her divine Son are notably absent.

A CAMPAIGN FOR GOOD READING

There should be in every Sodality an active, vigorous section for the popularizing of Catholic literature, and it might well make one of its chief activities a regu-

lar campaign for Catholic books in Catholic homes. By urging the Sodalists to buy a book every month for their home library, this section can bring about an abundance of the right sort of reading in Catholic families, and few things would help more effectually to keep up the Catholic spirit and the spirit of the Sodality.

The secret of promoting good reading is to have a great abundance of Catholic books everywhere so that no one can fail to find one at hand in the leisure moments when he or she wishes to read. People will read what they find most convenient, and one cause for the desultory and harmful reading so common nowadays is precisely that bad books and bad magazines, or at least worldly and worthless ones, are constantly being circulated by powerful commercial agencies. Not that all non-Catholic books and magazines are harmful. It would be foolish to think such a thing. But anyone who trusts to chance to supply him with reading matter, will surely find himself devouring much that is worthless or evil. Only by supplying good books in the home in great abundance, can the right sort of reading be effectively stimulated. A good book in the right place at the right time is the best means of promoting good reading.

THE SODALIST'S TALK AT HOME

The talk in the Sodalist's home should also be a matter of serious thought. Ordinary every-day speech has such an influence on character, especially of the young. What they hear in the family circle, sinks profoundly into their memory and will be recalled and repeated ever so many years afterward when they in turn are governing families of their own. Outside their own home, the children may be on their guard against bad influences in the way of

speech. What they hear they will not take too easily for truth, but will suspect and weigh it in their youthful fashion. But what they hear at home is likely to pass with them as genuine and right. If, then, the Sodalists in the home speak uncharitably of others, they help just in so far to instil into the children the habit of uncharitable talk. The younger ones will echo their elders, and when they have once become accustomed to unkind speech about their neighbors, it will be vain to warn them or correct them. Example is much more effective than precept.

A worldly way of talking and of expressing judgments and opinions, is also very harmful in the Catholic home. From the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh, and those who let their minds and hearts become full of the principles, maxims, and ambitions of the world will express their attitude and judgments almost unconsciously. The spirit of the world is at odds with the spirit of Christ; and anyone who thinks and speaks from merely worldly and human motives and standards, is no faithful follower of Christ. The Sodalists should remark their own way of speaking in the family circle and should notice whether uncharitableness, worldly principles, low standards of thought or conduct have any place in their talk. If so, they should very carefully reform their way of speaking because it is unworthy of one who professes closely to follow the Mother of Christ.

GOOD EXAMPLE AT HOME

The general good example of the Sodalist in the home should also be a matter of self-examination from time to time. To be selfish, irritable, peevish, unsympathetic toward others, is sometimes very natural to our poor human selves, but it is entirely unworthy of a client of Our Lady. She was the most gentle,

kind, and considerate of mortals, and her entire life did not show a single instance of fretfulness or selfishness. The little glimpses which the Gospels give us of her life, charmingly illustrate the beautiful tranquillity and charity of her soul. At the marriage feast of Cana, how tenderly she compassionated the perplexity of the young couple, about to be humiliated before all their guests because there was no more wine. After the long anguish of her searching for her beloved Son, when she found Him in the temple, how meekly she spoke of the distress of her heart. "And His Mother said to Him: Son, why hast Thou done so to us? Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing." The Sodalist who wishes to imitate in an effective way the Virgin Mother, may do so by copying her tranquil charity in her home and among the circle of her friends.

IMITATING THE CHARITY OF MARY

Nor should the Sodalist's home lack that other characteristic of the Virgin Mother, her unwearying charity for the poor, her eagerness to help and minister to others. We need not be told in detail of the spirit of tenderness for the needy and afflicted which characterizes the Blessed Virgin. She was a most close imitator in this as in all else of her divine Son, Who delighted to heal the sick and comfort the sorrowful. Besides, she knew from His teachings that whatsoever we do to one of His least brethren is done unto Him; and nothing pleased her more than to serve and console Him, whether in His own proper person or in the person of those whom He loves as His brothers and sisters.

The Sodalist's home, therefore, should abound in charity. The poor and the afflicted should find mercy and shelter there. Some part of the revenues of the

household should go to the relief of misery and sorrow. The Christ-like charity of Mary should find a continual reflection in the charities exercised by the Catholic home.

Finally, the Sodalist's home should be likewise a place of refinement, of culture, of the truest and the noblest kind. Whatever is worthy, beautiful and lofty should strike some sympathetic chord in the heart of every one who truly loves and appreciates the Virgin Mother of God. She is the most beautiful, after her Divine Son, of all the flowers of human nature. In these two the ideal is made real and in them we may contemplate the perfection of our human race as it is in the mind of God, unsullied by any sin, original or wrought. One perfect Man, who is also God, and one perfect woman, who is His true Mother according to the flesh, are vouchsafed to us as objects of our contemplation. In heaven for all eternity they will be our joy and delight. On earth they have been the inspiration of the purest and highest art, the loftiest literature, the most sublime architecture which the world has known. Michelangelo, Da Vinci, Raphael, Fra Angelico, Murillo, the princes of the realms of painting and sculpture, have reached the loftiest heights of their inspiration by the aid of the contemplation of Jesus and Mary. Dante, the prince of poets, owes most to them. The sublime cathedrals which blossom from the soil of Europe like growths of some heavenly seed, owe their dignity and beauty to the piety of men who built these shrines to Jesus and Mary.

THE HERITAGE OF CATHOLIC CULTURE

The Sodalist who truly loves Christ and His Blessed Mother will wish also to learn more and more of the lovely conceptions of great artists, poets, archi-

tects, who have wrought in their honor. This pure culture is also an effective antidote against the trivial and debased literature and art of the day. It is sad to find so many Catholics and even Sodalists who have deprived themselves of the great heritage of Catholic culture by neglecting to study or take an interest in great Catholic art, literature, architecture. The non-Catholic of culture delights in these things and studies them with earnestness. It is time that our Catholics took at least their share in popularizing these noble influences.

If the picture which we have drawn of the Sodalist's home, seems difficult of realization, let us remember that to approach the ideal, not always to achieve it, is our credit and merit here on earth. Everyone who belongs to the Sodality should be able to do something toward improving the atmosphere of his home, its pictures, and books, its conversation and example, the culture which prevails there and the manners which rule. Beginning with himself, he will become in every way a worthy child of Mary. Then it will be easier to bring to the standard the other inhabitants of his household.

CHAPTER XX

DAILY MASS

"EVERY morning let them be present, if they can, at the adorable Sacrifice of the Mass." (Rule 34.)

UNAVAILING REGRETS

Purgatory is not only a place of punishment for unatoned-for sins and for the arrears of penalty for sins that have been forgiven. It is also, it seems to me, a place where we shall regret very bitterly the missed opportunities for meriting a higher place in heaven. When we shall have finished our last precious moment on earth and have passed by the last opportunity for merit; when all of the golden chances that God strews before our steps for loving Him more, pleasing Him more perfectly, serving Him more worthily shall have vanished forever, then part of our punishment in purgatory will, I think, be the keen regret and sorrow that we did not use better the immense, most precious, unceasing opportunities of greater merit on earth and greater glory in heaven, which we are now accustomed to let so lightly slip away from us. In that bath of pain, rehearsing in sorrow the missed chances of our lives, shall we not regret very keenly that we were not more diligent and prudent in taking the countless opportunities that are ours of assisting every day at the most holy and precious sacrifice of the Mass?

The author of the Imitation of Christ makes a pregnant inquiry concerning this Holy Sacrifice. Suppose, says he, that it were allowed by God's majesty that the Sacrifice of the Mass should be offered up only once a year and at one place in the world. What throngs of pilgrims would assemble! What sacrifice and effort men and women would gladly think it worth while to make so as to be present at this unique and sacred mystery! Yet each Mass that is offered up throughout the earth is worth as much effort, sacrifice and planning to assist at it; for the Mass is always the same in dignity, efficacy, and power; and every Mass, wherever said, in how humble surroundings soever, is the true repetition of the saving sacrifice of the Son of God upon the cross.

Human words are too weak to speak befittingly of the preciousness of this adorable Sacrifice and of the privilege of assisting at Mass.

A RENEWAL OF CALVARY'S SACRIFICE

Our Faith assures us that the Mass is the true though unbloody repetition of the sacrifice which our Blessed Lord offered upon Calvary when He gave His life for our salvation. Mind, it is not merely a commemoration of that saving sacrifice, it is not only a symbolic representation, a solemn remembrance, a sacred depicting of the offering of the Son of God for the redemption of our souls. It is much more than this; it is, literally and in the full sense of the words, the same awful sacrifice, repeated, reproduced, renewed. Christ does again, though without the shedding of His sacred blood, what He did upon the cross. He is again, literally and not merely in figure, immolated for our sins. He becomes again our victim and high priest, our holocaust and our

intercessor. Present at the Mass wherever and whenever said, we are literally present at the sacrifice of the cross. Assisting at Mass, we make ourselves sharers again in the passion and death of Our Saviour. Kneeling before the altar and joining with the priest in offering up the Mass to our Father in heaven, we share in the sacrifice of Christ as though we had knelt on Calvary with the Mother of God and the fortunate and beloved apostle; and when we are present at the consecration of the Mass we are present, literally, at the sacrifice of Calvary.

A STUPENDOUS PRIVILEGE

These are wonderful words, and if we understood and fully realized their meaning we should be ready to make any sacrifice, go to any trouble, pay any price to assist often and, if at all possible, every day at the Mass. Suppose that we had been among the number of those few and fortunate disciples of Our Lord who confessed their faith in His divinity and were admitted to the number of His followers while He still lived in Judea. Suppose that to us came one morning a messenger from the Lord to tell us that He was on that day to lay down His life for us on Calvary and wished us to come and unite ourselves to Him in offering up the amazing sacrifice that was to save the world. What a stupendous privilege we should have thought it, if we were wise and brave, to be allowed to stand beneath the cross with our Blessed Mother and St. John and the holy women, and to join the Saviour of mankind in His infinitely meritorious act of supreme love, adoration, atonement, and supplication to His heavenly Father! No effort, no weariness, no sacrifice of ease, profit or pleasure would have been too great a price to pay for such a privilege. Yet, the selfsame privi-

lege is offered us every time we are given the opportunity of assisting at the most holy sacrifice of the Mass.

CO-OFFERERS OF THE SACRIFICE

Indeed, in a certain sense we have greater privileges when we assist at Mass than would have been ours if we had been present at the sacrifice on Calvary. For we can receive the adorable Victim, not only into our arms as His Blessed Mother did after His death, but into our hearts in holy communion. Besides, in making sacrifices and efforts to be present at Mass, we have the added merit of an exercise of faith. For, it is by faith only that we know that here on the altar is Christ Jesus Himself, offering His body and soul in sacrifice for our redemption. Finally, the faithful who are present at Mass join with the priest in offering up that dear and holy Sacrifice. For, in the Canon of the Mass, when the priest commemorates his own intentions, he says: "Be mindful also, O Lord, of Thy servants, men and women, and of all here present, whose faith and devotion are known unto Thee; for whom we offer, *or who offer to Thee,* this Sacrifice of praise for themselves and all belonging to them." Very clearly these words indicate that not only does the priest offer the sacrifice of the Mass for all who assist thereat, but they, the faithful present, are co-offerers of the Holy Sacrifice, and in a true sense offer it up themselves for their own benefit and for all belonging to them.

WORTH ANY EFFORT

To be present at the adorable sacrifice of the Mass every morning is worth, then, far more effort and sacrifice than most of us will ever find it neces-

sary to pay. It would be worth while to walk many miles, to undergo losses and privations, to suffer weariness and discomfort in order to assist daily at the Holy Sacrifice. What shall we say, then, of those who would find it comparatively easy to get to daily Mass, who pass a church every morning on their way to work and would only need to leave home half an hour earlier, to hurry a bit perhaps with dressing, to rise in a little better time, to start off more promptly, in order to assist at the Sacrifice of our redemption? How we shall regret, at the hour when death is approaching to put an end to all our opportunities of merit, that we did not seize every chance to go to Holy Mass!

SURVEY YOUR CHANCES

Even those who seem to themselves to be in no position to attend Mass every morning, would do well to sit down quietly and reflect whether their inability may not be only fancied and whether they are not cheating themselves of that exceeding blessing. There is many a one who would be far the better, even in a bodily way, for getting to bed earlier and taking a brisk and early morning walk ending at the church, where he can hear an early Mass. We have known devout men and fervent women who for many years made a practice of this early rising so as to hear Mass and receive holy communion before the duties of the day began, and in some instances they kept up this blessed practice far into a hale old age and almost to the very day of their death, when they were as full of years as of merits. How much simple pleasure and sweet devotion those morning walks with God, to assist at the sacrifice of Calvary, must have brought them even in this world! They are rejoicing now in their happiness

without end, in the added glory, the greater nearness to God, and the more exquisite happiness for all eternity which they merited, far beyond what they could conceive, by their daily faithfulness at Holy Mass.

Count up, then, in the light of these reflections, your own opportunities for getting daily to Mass, as a miser might con over his chances of gain. We must, as St. Augustine says, be skilful merchants for the kingdom of heaven, and sell what we cannot keep, to gain what we cannot lose. The days slip from you very swiftly; you cannot keep a particle of that time which is given you to merit heaven. What better use could you make of a half-hour out of every day than in assisting at the sacrifice of Calvary? If it were a question of an earthly profit that bore any proportion to the spiritual benefits of Mass, you would not think any efforts excessive. How hard you work, what sacrifices to secure it you make sometimes, for far less precious things! A half-hour spent at Mass will bring you perhaps more profit for eternity than all the rest of the day. Your prayers, in union with the efficacious Sacrifice of Christ's body and blood, will gain far more for you than any care you can take for your own welfare. Begin a day with Mass, and you have saved that day for eternity. For, the day on which we have heard Mass is a day well used—we have consecrated it to God in its very commencement.

DAILY COMMUNION

If, in addition to going daily to Holy Mass, we are so fortunate as to be able also, even at the cost of some keenly felt inconvenience or sacrifice (or shall we not say, especially when it costs us dear?) to receive holy communion every day, we should

count ourselves among the spoiled children of God. There have been times in the world when great saints sighed and wept to receive often and daily, and the consolation was denied them. Perhaps at no age of the Church was it so easy as it is now to enjoy the immense privilege of daily Mass and daily communion. We shall rejoice in heaven if we take our share of this great gift of God and are industrious and prudent in going often to the hill of Calvary and kneeling often at the Table of God. How we shall pine in vain regret and count over our enormous loss when we look back over the days of our life as we lie on our deathbed, with all our opportunities over and the moments of our life swiftly running to their end, if we have to think how easily we might have gained the immense merit and grace of daily Mass and communion and would not pay the price of such a little effort, such an easy resolution and consoling endeavor!

CHAPTER XXI

FEEDING OUR MINDS

"THEY must keep from bad reading." (Rule 35.) There are some things which we need often to repeat to ourselves and one another so as to make some effective effort to keep from being swept away by the spirit of the times. One of these perennial cautions and exhortations is that which concerns our care in the selection of what we read. The rule of the Sodality, quoted above puts it very tersely and simply—we "must keep from bad reading." We Americans do not like to be controlled nor to limit ourselves. There is a spirit abroad of seeing everything, knowing everything, and consequently of reading everything which affects us strongly, a part as we are of the general age. So we, each one of us, have a tendency to wish to devour every bit of printed matter that comes our way, without considering for a moment whether what we are going to read will be profitable to us or no, without ever thinking, perhaps, what effect this miscellaneous and indiscriminate reading has on our minds and souls.

OUR INSATIABLE APPETITE FOR PRINT

It is rather ridiculous, when one thinks of it, this insatiable appetite to read everything we see. A bit of paper blown along the street with print upon it arrests our attention. The magazines that we glimpse on the counters of bookstores or in druggists' win-

dows catch our eyes because of this universal appeal of print. A book that comes our way, though utterly unrecommended and merely taken up at haphazard, stands an excellent chance of being read, and read through, if its contents seem interesting when once we have tasted them. Most of us are too apt, after awhile, to get in the way of choosing our reading at all. What we read is what is thrust upon us, what comes our way, or is imposed on our attention by the incessant and interminable activities of circulation agencies.

WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN READING?

What have you read, for instance, during the past week? The past month? The past year? Have you made a careful selection of those books and papers which are most likely to profit you and contribute to the growth of your mind and the goodness of your soul? Or have you devoured only a perfect helter-skelter of miscellaneous trash that has blown into your hands from heaven knows where and encumbered your mind and your imagination? What a heap of unassorted stuff men read nowadays, of a good deal of which they could not say whether it is false or true! If you find on a brief examination that you have been reading merely at haphazard, picking up what came to hand, and not selecting at all what you read, then you certainly have been doing a grave injustice to your own mind and heart. For, what we read has just as definite and momentous an influence on the growth and temper of our mind as what we take for food has upon our bodies.

Our mind and our imagination grow on what we feed them. The imagination is a retentive and creative faculty which gathers in all the images we give it, either through the eyes or the ears, and keeps

them to be brought up again vividly before us and turned into new combinations according as impulse or our will directs. What your imagination is busy with now is something that was fed to it through your senses in the days that have past. And this freakish faculty, which does so much harm to us and disturbs so much the even temper of our thoughts, is continually taking revenge upon us for the sordid or foolish things that we have suffered it to feed on in the past.

DANGEROUS MENTAL FOOD

What a senseless thing it is, then, to be forever feeding our sensitive and retentive imagination on the sorry stuff that abounds in present-day books and periodicals! It is far more foolish than feeding our body on unwholesome and indigestible food, for that can only hurt our physical health; whereas, to feed the imagination on foolishness and, worse still, on evil is to injure the health and perhaps destroy the life of the soul. Consider what chance you should have of keeping your health of body if you ate everything that came your way promiscuously, not caring whether it was gathered from the street or had lain in the sun in unclean stalls or had been let to rot and decay before it was brought to the table. No one would think nowadays, in this fastidious and hygienic age, of feeding his body on food that is stale and corrupt. But is not that the very thing we do to our imaginations when we suffer them to devour literally everything that comes our way? What hope can there be of our keeping pure, clean, and lofty imaginations if the commonest literature of the street is to feed us and to fill this lively storehouse of images?

The mind takes an even worse harm from bad reading, because its nature is superior to that of the imagination and it deals with ideas and theories.

Theories seem light and trivial things when we read them in print, and they seem still less worthy of attention when they are dressed in fiction and put out by some half-educated modern novelist. But bad theories are the most dangerous things in the world, because it is our tendency, when once a theory has fixed itself in our minds, to reduce it speedily to action. Rousseau wrote a little book which was accounted of very small importance when first it appeared, yet its theories lit the flame that swept all Europe with revolution. We should be even more on guard against polluting our mind with false theories than we are against injuring our imagination by feeding it unworthy and corrupt images, because these theories, once they have become part of the fiber of our minds, will gradually influence our actions, and we may be amazed ourselves to see how far we have gone in consequence of the false principles that we have absorbed in silly novels and current literature.

HALF-BAKED LITERARY THEORIZERS

It is characteristic of the half-baked literature of today that it is as full of theories as a pudding is of plums. The men and women who write these books are not particularly brilliant in their intellects nor have they had the training necessary to entitle them to act as guides of public opinion. So, if they were to attempt to write formal treatises to sustain the principles which they bring out in their novels, they would be laughed to scorn. Yet these same fictionists, when they are weaving the airy fabrications of their brain, contrive to teach whatever theory has hold of them at the time, with a dogmatism and insistence, with a skill of insinuation and art of allusion worthy of a better cause.

Whoever reads a modern novel is constantly ex-

posed to be preached at by these irresponsible dogmatizers. Their novels are really often but expanded parables which teach too frequently the sophistries of the world and the flesh and the devil, and poison the mind with false but specious theories. Even where this preaching is not found there is too often a softness, a dwelling upon earthly motives, a constant taking for granted of low ideals and earthly principles, which is just as dangerous in its way because this preaches too the age-old doctrines of Vanity Fair, the ancient sophistry of worldliness, which is at the root of all other sophistries and which is death to the soul and corruption to the heart. Even though all these dangers did not exist in current literature, it is a danger in itself to be reading everything that comes our way, it makes our mind a curiosity shop, a heap of unassorted notions and impressions under which the spiritual life is crushed and smothered and in which serious purposes and high ideals lose their way and are choked by dust.

THE POISON OF BAD PRINT

It is difficult to keep one's mind clean, pure, strong, and intent on the things of heaven when we are constantly, in season and out of season, imbibing an unassorted diet of worldliness, curiosities, and trifles. A modern author, who has made a very extensive study of spiritism and has deduced therefrom some principles concerning the way in which the devil is tempting modern men and women, asserts his conviction that miscellaneous reading, unchosen and snatched up at the mere impulse of curiosity, is one of the gravest snares of the devil. It puts the mind in a passive, subjective and receptive attitude, he says, in which temptations are easy of entrance and in which the wiles of the evil one go unnoticed,

slipping in as they do under the cloak of many trifles. Be this as it may, it is certain that miscellaneous reading done out of mere curiosity and at haphazard by picking up whatever comes our way, is one of the misfortunes of the time, which has led serious men to ask whether, after all, the invention of the printing press has not done more harm than good.

READING IN CATHOLIC HOMES

Needless to say, the plague of miscellaneous reading should be kept far from a Catholic household. It is atrocious to see fathers and mothers of families admitting to their library table and suffering to circulate through the household, magazines and books which have upon them the stamp of Satan and which are obviously intended as snares to souls. How carefully they seek to keep physical contagion and corrupt food from their children! They should be no less eager to guard the health of their souls; and one of the most acute dangers to the health of souls at this present age is a silly and voracious habit of indiscriminate reading. We must not read bad books.

The Sodalist in particular should take these reflections to heart, because bad reading is but too apt to tarnish that stainless purity of soul which is to be the characteristic of all true children of Mary.

GOOD BOOKS THE ANTIDOTE

"What is to be the antidote for bad reading?" some Sodalist inquires, pondering over this phrase of the rules. For a negative instruction is seldom satisfactory or complete. But the antidote is obvious, and the positive side of the rule is almost too plain to need mention. The antidote for bad reading, of course, is good reading. Be a partisan and patron of the Sodality library and urge the bringing of it up to date

by the purchase of new books. Keep good books about you where they will meet you at every turn. Have a library of your own and use it yourself. Lend good books to your friends and borrow theirs in return.

A book should be considered currency, not real property. Make your books travel and live in various hands. Be enthusiastic about good books. If you follow these simple directions and associate yourself intimately with the excellent Catholic books that crowd the shelves of our Catholic booksellers nowadays, you will not have to bother with precautions against bad reading. You will despise the fluffy, poisonous stuff that is corrupting the public mind and cheapening popular thought so sadly nowadays. Avoid bad reading? Of course you will. With a cultivated liking for what is good and pure, you will have nothing to do with corrupt and cheap print of any kind. You will have for such trashy reading neither the taste nor the time.

CHAPTER XXII

YOUR OWN LIBRARY

"THEY must keep from bad reading." (Rule 35.) We have just said that the best way to keep from bad reading is to acquire a taste for good books. Hence, to have one's own library is a short cut to good reading. Nowadays, when books are so cheap and easily obtained, one loses a deal of satisfaction by not having a store of good books of one's own. To own a book is much better than to borrow it from a library; you have it always at your elbow and you can take it up at just those moments when you feel like reading. Any book that you like and get profit from, you should keep and cherish as a friend. A good book, near by, is a constant companion, very patient and ready. One can look into it ever and again and always find welcome thoughts.

GOOD LITERARY COMPANY

Making friends with good books is keeping good company. In a good book one has the very best that a good man or woman has to offer, and the company of books is really more profitable sometimes than the company of their writers would have been, because we find in books the best selves of those who wrote them. A very dear and very wise old lady once told us of her meeting with Washington Irving, then in the heyday of his reputation. It was in Europe, in the midst of those historic scenes which had given

Irving his finest inspiration, and this old lady, then a young and very fervent admirer of Irving, looked forward to that interview with tiptoe expectation. She had enjoyed the company of the author so much in his books that she hoped to have a perfectly delightful time chatting with the gifted writer of them. Alas for rosy expectations! When she was introduced to the great author, he only sat and stared at his boots, and would vouchsafe scarcely a word in answer to her voluble conversation. The best of him was written into his books, she thought, and she went back to their reading a wiser girl, realizing for the first time that the books might be better company than the man.

BOOKS AT ONE'S ELBOW

The volumes which do us most good are those that we have most constantly by us and into which we glance from time to time in the weary or the leisure hour. It is all very well to borrow a book from the library when we mean only to glance through it and get a hasty notion of its contents or when it is worth reading only once. Books that merit only a single reading are fit to be left in libraries. But if we mean really to become acquainted with a book, we should have it by us and let it influence us. Then it will speak to us often, and get into our confidence in just those little moments when we shall like to take it up for a quarter-hour's reading.

Bacon's memorable saying, so many times quoted, that some books are merely to be tasted, others chewed and swallowed, and still others thoroughly digested, is very suggestive here. As to the books that merit merely a taste, a quick glance through them at the booksellers' counter or at the current book shelves at the library will be all we care to have of them. The

books that are to be chewed and swallowed one may borrow from the library, too. Having read them through, perhaps once and again, one has pretty well done with them and has gotten all that they can give. But the books which are to be thoroughly digested require to be tasted often and ruminated upon at leisure, and these are the books that we should have on shelves of our own, near to our hand. Even to possess them is mental riches, and to be able to look into them whenever we like is worth endlessly more than the cost and trouble of getting them and keeping them near us.

SHARING WITH OUR FRIENDS

The next best thing to reading a good book is the pleasure of recommending it to our friends. If we are generous we shall like to share our own favorite authors with others and to encourage them to think with and enjoy the writers of whom we are fond. To have read a good book together or to have given and taken a good book to read is a new bond between friends. Just as mental riches are superior to riches of the body, so the gift of the reading of a good book is above the gift of silver or gold. But we cannot comment upon and lend good books to others unless we love and possess good books ourselves. Enthusiasm is contagious, and a book warm from the hand of a friend has double attractiveness and interest, because it comes so earnestly recommended.

It is hard to measure the good done by right reading, and if we have the good books which we like all about us, ready to be taken up and offered to those who come to see us, we shall be doing them a favor and giving ourselves a pleasure that is beyond price. Really cultivated people are passionately fond of books and like to have books about them, and it is a bereavement and a loss not to be surrounded by these

silent, obliging, confidential friends. When Cardinal Newman was at one time pondering whether his vocation led him to enter a Religious Order and to the consequent giving up of his property, he thought that one of the most difficult sacrifices this step would entail was the giving up of his books.

A SINGULAR INSTANCE

The ardent manager of a Catholic circulating library once told us a story which illustrates very vividly the good that may be done by worthy reading. One of the patronesses of the library, a Catholic girl, who worked downtown, had one evening borrowed a book and was walking home with it. To her surprise and indignation a young man who was going down the street in the opposite direction, seeing the book under her arm, and, carried away by a pure spirit of mischief, took hold of it, jerked it from her, and with an insolent laugh proceeded down the street with the book in his possession. The poor girl could do nothing save bite her lip and go on in silence; there seemed no way either of punishing the rascal or of getting back the book. She had almost forgotten the incident, when, a couple of weeks later, she noticed the same young man coming toward her, and he evidently wanted to stop and speak. Her eyes flashing, the girl stood still, when to her amazement the young man, with an exceedingly humble air, handed her the book which he had so rudely snatched from her.

"I want to give you this back," he said, "and beg your pardon. Honestly, that book was the salvation of me. I took it away from you out of pure devilment. I felt sore and mean and wanted to do somebody harm. I was getting into an awfully bad way, was running with a bad crowd, had given up my religion and was dissipating. I was in a desperate,

nasty humor altogether. When I had gone down the street with the book, I wondered what to do with it. I did not want it, and I was just going to throw it away when it occurred to me to look into it a little and see what sort of trashy, sentimental stuff it was. But it was a good Catholic book, and when I once started reading, it brought back a lot of things my mother used to tell me. The honest fact is," he concluded, "that by the time I had got through reading that book I had been to confession and communion and quit the gang I was running with, had got a job again, and now I am straight and clean for good, and it is the first time in eight years!"

The girl was speechless again, but this time from pure delight, and she lost no time in telling the ardent manager of the library just how much good the little volume had done.

UNWEARYING WELL-DOERS

A good Catholic book is almost a sacramental; it never wearies on its quiet mission; it may pass through a hundred hands and fall under many eyes, but it never leaves off repeating, with fidelity and honesty unwearied, the good entrusted to it. Books can wait for our moods to be propitious, they can stand silent and unobtrusive until just that happy moment comes when we shall be prepared to hear what they have to tell us. They will go anywhere, abide anywhere, accompany us on travels or stay quietly at home with us for years upon years. There is no appeal more constant, no friendliness more ready than the appeal and friendliness of a good book. Our dwelling and our rooms are poor and unfurnished, no matter what elegance and comfort we have about them, unless they are well supplied with the right sort of books.

AN INDEX OF PERSONALITY

One's own library is the most intimate of personal possessions; it is a comfort and a convenience of which we should not deprive ourselves, no matter what other privations we have to bear. A well selected library, built up with personal care and accumulated, during years, is an excellent index of our own mind and heart. The time-worn saying, "Tell me your company and I will tell you what you are," is markedly true of the bookish company one chooses. Have you remarked how some persons, as soon as they come into a room where books are kept, fly to the bookshelves and begin to scan the titles? They may not wish to read a single one of the volumes, but they have an instinctive eagerness to see what books are kept in that house. If they see a pell-mell, helter-skelter collection of miscellaneous stuff with dust upon it, they get no very high notion of the owner's intellect and heart. But if the titles of the books speak refinement, Catholic faith and wise selection, they have proof presumptive of the refinement and taste of the man or woman who has got them and keeps them together.

A BUSINESS MAN'S EXPERIENCE

A successful attorney, whose practice required him to know a great deal about technical details and matters of science was once speaking on the immense advantage that his Catholic reading had been to him in his profession. "From my schoolboy days," said he, "I had a taste for solid reading. I never could abide the light and trivial stuff that some of my friends read in their leisure hours, so I gathered in my home a collection of solid Catholic works of apologetics, histories and biographies. I

read these for recreation as well as information. I had no notion," he continued, "that the information I was half unconsciously gathering from these books would help me in my profession, but I find a remarkable advantage from years of such serious reading. My mind is stored with a vast deal of information, absorbed by the way, on science and art and history, the things that one comes on in biographies, histories or in the course of treatises on Catholic apologetics. When I am arguing a case in court which involves some question of history or science, I find, to my own surprise as well as to that of my fellow lawyers, that I am able to quote definite instances and point out practical examples which are astonishingly to the point. I hardly know sometimes where I got them. But they evidently come from the long-standing companionship of solid and serious books. The reading which I did from the mere love of it and from a wish to know about the Church, her heroes and her doctrines, has given me one of the best assets that I possess."

YOUR PERSONAL LIBRARY

This is a very practical argument, surely, for good reading, and everyone who has long indulged in a love of worthy books can bear a similar testimony. They enrich and benefit not only by the pleasant passing of useful hours in the reading of them, but by the permanent wealth they bring to the intellect, the memory and the heart. So we should like to see all Sodalists who have not yet done so, particularly the young, begin at once to gather their personal library, stamped with their own individuality and reflecting their own tastes and aspirations. The books may be bought little by little, now one attractive volume and now another, and the rule to be followed is to suit

one's own tastes—but always with good books. One should buy only those books which will be worthy companions and helpers to one's faith, one's intellect and heart. Much the same rule holds in buying books as in making friendships, and we should not allow any volume on the shelves of our own library which is not a fit companion and a friend we should be glad to own.

BOOKS AS LIFELONG FRIENDS

If our young folk would begin thus to develop their personal libraries when they are beginning their career in life, what a fine set of bookish friendships they would form! What a noble company of good reading they would have to cheer their later years! Old age brings with it many limitations and trials, but the aged man or woman is happy when surrounded by tried friends whose conversation has been relished from former days, whose thoughts are congenial, whose enthusiasm revives the fires of youth, who have been gathered together in years of active effort, and who now, in the quiet evening of life, stand ready and faithful, the companions of each vacant hour and ready to give cheer to their friends or to beguile their own hours of ease.

CHAPTER XXIII

ON AVOIDING SCANDAL

"AND in general let them fly all occasions that are dangerous to their souls or could give scandal or disedification to their neighbor." (Rule 35.)

OUR GREAT RESPONSIBILITY

We are inclined to imitate one another. Have you ever realized what a constant watch you yourself keep upon the actions of those about you and how profoundly you are influenced by what you see them do and hear them say? When we were children we learned most of the things we know by imitating and listening to those around us; and this constant influence of others is still strong upon us It would be exceedingly hard for us to say just how much of the good we have is the result of the good example we have received, and how many of our faults are the consequence of evil example that has unconsciously swayed us. So our human nature is made, and there is no escaping the fact of our mutual influence. For good or for evil, example is most powerful. Hence our immense responsibility for the example we give to others. We are constantly speaking to them in the silent language of our actions, and encouraging them to good or moving them to evil according as they see us virtuous or wicked.

OUR CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE

It is for this reason that the exhortation which we have just quoted from the rule is of such importance—that we should not only fly all the occasions that are dangerous to our own soul, but carefully avoid whatever could give scandal or disedification to others. We are unconsciously apt to minimize our own influence and importance in regard to other people. "What do they care," we say, "how I act or what I do? Nobody notices me, and if I do give a bad example now and then, no one will pay any attention to it." A very false conclusion. Though we may be extremely unimportant in the general scheme of things and known and cared for only by a narrow circle of individuals, yet within that little circle our influence is amazing, and those in particular who are younger than we or who are bound to us by any tie of relationship or affection are astonishingly swayed by what we say or do.

We should especially be particular to avoid giving scandal or disedification to young people, for it is they whose characters are building and who are like clay to the impressions they receive. They are likely to look on their elders as models for imitation and to copy their very ways of speech and of action. If they see that you whom they respect and look up to, have certain ways of acting and talking, they will be exceedingly apt to reproduce them, and you may be startled to notice your own faults coming out vividly in their characters.

THE SCANDAL OF CRITICISM

Its critics say that this is an irreverent, self-indulgent, and conceited age. A free way of criticising

authorities, temporal and spiritual, an impatience of restraint and regulation, a silly license in forming judgments and pronouncing opinions on questions in which we have no possible authority nor even hope of being right unless we take the guidance of our elders and betters, a general cocksureness on all subjects, human and divine—these faults of the times may very likely be noticeable in our attitude and in our talk. We may take it on ourselves to criticise priests, to make remarks about the general government of the Church, to pronounce judgment on things which we are not even remotely qualified even to understand, because their thorough understanding would involve a knowledge of circumstances, conditions, and principles which we have never had the means of learning. Now there is a great and sad possibility of scandal and disedification in this kind of talk. We do not really mean to be disrespectful or impertinent to higher authority. We say what we say, thoughtlessly, and only half meaning our criticisms and complaints. But young ears are drinking in our querulous aspersions, and they take us seriously, much more seriously than we take ourselves. The consequence is that in those young hearts that passionate allegiance which every Catholic should have to the Church and its ministers is spoiled, and a coldness and suspicion may be begotten by our words which will flower out in after life into the weedy and poisonous blossoms of indifference to, or absolute rebellion against, the Church.

OF BAD READING

Again, we should be exceedingly careful in this matter of scandal and disedification not to give a bad example to the young folk in the matter of promiscu-

ous reading. There may be books and magazines and papers which seem not to do us much harm personally. So perhaps we read them, merely from curiosity and without any worthy motive. We are somewhat seasoned, we say, to the impressions they give, and we take no great injury from their perusal. But seeing us read these things and leave them about the house, the youngsters will take them up after us and find no harm either, in reading what we ourselves seem so much interested in. So their imagination may be poisoned, their hearts seared with worldliness, and a taste for bad or trashy reading will be cultivated in them when they might have gotten from our example a cultured taste for what is excellent.

We may say the same about other departments of human conduct. We should have a specially tender care and a specially delicate conscience about giving scandal and disedification to the young. They are most susceptible, and the tragedy of it is that, impressionable as they are now, their characters so soon harden to adamantine stiffness, and the bad impressions we leave on them will never be quite obliterated to the end of their days.

Even toward the mature with whom we associate and who are constantly with us, we should exercise a constant care lest we give scandal or disedification. They, too, are influenced in their degree by our actions and our talk; and it would amaze us to see how seriously they take and how sedulously they follow suggestions and influences of which we are scarcely conscious. "Men are but children of a larger growth" is a proverb that speaks a vast deal of human nature, and even the wisest and gravest are prone to imitate and unconsciously take color from what they see and hear around them.

THEIR INFLUENCE ON OTHERS

Even thoroughly good and pious men and women, who are very little susceptible themselves to certain lines of temptation, may become a positively bad influence to others because they are so free and careless in things which may mean to those about them serious temptation. They can trifle with worldliness, they can read books and papers which are saturated with sin, they can follow fashions which are dangerous, without much harm to themselves because they are little prone to the temptations arising from these things. But they forget that to those about them what to them is small harm may tempt to grievous evil. While they forget so readily the influence they are having on others, they really are giving disedification and scandal, and hurting the very persons whom they most love and desire to shield.

With the advance of medical science students in bacteriology have pointed out the existence of certain individuals who, though not susceptible themselves to germs of diseases, are "carriers," according to the technical term, and bear about with them infection for others. Thus, there have been found persons who carry in their mouths the germs of diphtheria, of spinal meningitis, and kindred diseases, so that wherever they go cases of these diseases arise, though they themselves are never seriously harmed by the germs which they carry.

"DISEASE CARRIERS"

In the great military camps where our youth was gathered in training for the Army, one found in every hospital, wards set apart for the detention of these "carriers," and the attendant physician would tell you as you passed a ward: "Those men in there are

all spinal meningitis carriers. They haven't the disease themselves, but we cannot turn them loose in the camp because they would infect many others."

When one reflects, this is a parable of what happens in the case of persons who give scandal by their careless ways of talk and action. They themselves may not be very likely to commit any serious fault, but they do and say things which are scandalous and disedifying to others. So, while they remain in fairly good spiritual health themselves, they are spreading disease and perhaps spiritual death among those with whom they associate. It is regrettable that there is not a spiritual quarantine for such people. If they could be made aware of the harm they do by scandal and disedification and be kept segregated for a while in the seclusion of a spiritual retreat, they would become aware that, though they themselves are not in grave danger, they are a source of constant peril of infection.

OUR INFLUENCE FOR GOOD

This is the dark side of the picture—our vast ability to do harm to others by bad example. But we must not leave the subject without touching on the brighter and more hopeful side. Though we have great powers of doing evil, we have also a notable influence on others for good. It should cheer us on in every good effort and hearten us to attempt manfully the correcting of all our bad habits, to think that every bit of good worthy example we give to others is fruitful in them of good works. When others see us kind, self-sacrificing, and devoted to our duty, it becomes insensibly easier for them to be dutiful, self-sacrificing, and kind. When they see us devout in our reception of the sacraments, faithful in the practice of our religion, a mighty hope and cheer goes forth to them to imitate

such devotedness. The very efforts we make at self-control stir them up to energy in correcting their own bad inclinations, and so we are, in our better moments and under the influence of our good resolutions, a spiritual dynamo, sending out power and influence to all about us, a source of heat and light and strength to everyone within the influence of our good example.

THE EXAMPLE OF MARY

The Sodalist, then, who is devoted to the Blessed Mother and wishes to do everything possible in this brief life to promote her honor and that of her divine Son, should be particularly careful in this matter of giving good example. We should, as the rule directs, shun disedification and scandal as a pest and be solicitous about the influence of our words and actions upon others. We should endeavor to imitate the stainless innocence, the charity, the tender compassion and thoughtfulness of the Blessed Mother, so that we may be truly children of that holy Virgin who never gave the slightest disedification or scandal through all her perfect days, but who, throughout the centuries, practices in a supreme degree the glorious apostolate of good example.

CHAPTER XXIV

FREQUENT COMMUNION

"THEY should consider as addressed in a special manner to them the invitation to frequent and daily communion which the Holy See has made to all the faithful; and, therefore, each and every Sodalist is earnestly recommended to strengthen himself with the Bread of Angels, not only on the days when he can gain a plenary indulgence as a Sodalist, but also to strive to follow the pious and salutary custom, most eagerly desired by Christ Our Lord and the Catholic Church, of approaching the Holy Table often and even daily." (Rule 39.)

There was a time when, by a misunderstanding of the mind of the Church, many Sodalists, and even some Directors of Sodalities, considered that it was sufficient for the members of Sodalities to attend the monthly communions in common and thought little of striving after more frequent reception of the Blessed Sacrament. But the decree of our late Holy Father Pius X, to which reference is made in the rule quoted above, has made clear the mind of the Church and the desire of Our Lord Himself that all the faithful who can do so should approach the Holy Table often and, if possible, every day.

IN ACCORD WITH TRADITION

It is in accord with the noblest traditions of the Sodality that the new edition of the rules should re-

mind the Sodalists that this invitation of the Holy Father is in a special manner addressed to them. For the spirit of the children of the Blessed Mother has ever been to keep in the forefront of the lovers and worshipers of the Holy Sacrament. In the days when monthly communion was considered very frequent, and when even good and devout Catholics went, many of them, to communion only once a year, the Sodalities were among the chief means of promoting monthly communion. It was in great part through their efforts and the good example of their members that monthly communion became by degrees the rule among pious people. Indeed many pastors established Sodalities in their parishes with the express purpose of encouraging their people to go oftener to holy communion.

But now, to keep up the glorious tradition of the Sodality that its members are always in the van of those who practice devotion to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, it is necessary that we do very much more than promote merely monthly communion. As the rule declares, all Sodalists should now consider as addressed in a special manner to themselves the invitation to frequent and daily communion, and they should make every effort to approach the Holy Table often and, if possible, every day.

THE EASY CONDITIONS

The late Holy Father, Pius X, has made it very plain how easy and simple are the conditions on which we are invited to frequent and daily communion. It is only necessary, he says, that those who receive daily should be in the state of grace, and should approach the Holy Table with a good intention. To be in the state of grace means, of course, that our soul is free from mortal sin—not a

difficult nor unreasonable requirement—and a good intention means that we go to holy communion not merely from vanity or routine, but from a wish to please God and to profit our soul. This is all that the Church and Christ Himself requires; who shall venture to require more?

How many powerful motives impel us to frequent and, if possible, daily communion! First, the earnest invitation and desire of Our Lord, who chose bread, the daily food of almost the whole world, for the matter of the Sacrament, so as to intimate to us in the clearest way that He wishes His body to be the daily food of our soul. Again, as the Fathers of the Church point out to us, He bids us ask in the Our Father, "Give us this day our daily bread"—by which we understand the Holy Eucharist, which is the Bread of eternal life.

A PLEDGE OF SALVATION

Moreover, what action is more profitable to our soul than receiving the body of the Lord? He has told us, "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me and I in him," and that He will raise him up on the last day. Frequent communion, then, is a pledge of everlasting salvation. Indeed, as holy writers suggest to us, it would be unbecoming to think that Our Lord would suffer the soul which had fed on His sacred body often or every day, to become the sport of devils for eternity.

A FREE GIFT OF GRACE

Then, too, frequent communion marvelously increases our merit here and our glory hereafter. Every supernaturally good action brings an increase of sanctifying grace to our soul and, therefore, an increase of eternal glory in heaven. But in holy com-

munion we receive, over and above the increase of grace which is due to our own good action, a free gift from God of yet more grace, which comes to us by virtue of receiving a sacrament. For, the sacraments, as they are the moral acts of Christ Himself, have the efficacy to gain for us from God a gift of grace not merited by our own actions. We have no means of knowing definitely how great this gift may be, but it is surely very great, for when God sees us receiving into our hearts His own adorable Son, the depths of His divine generosity are moved, and He gives us a kingly bounty of grace which will gain us more, perhaps, of glory in heaven than we could obtain, aside from the sacraments, by many laborious days in the service of God. How prudent, then, to receive as often as we can the Blessed Sacrament which brings us this divine bounty!

MANY ACTUAL GRACES

Besides this gift of sanctifying grace there come to us with each reception of the body of Our Lord the right and title to many actual graces, which will be bestowed on us as we need them in the course of our days. For, just as our bodily food is meant to nourish the life of our body, and hence gives us strength and vigor not only at the time when we receive it, but also for many hours afterward, so also holy communion, which is literally and truly the food of our souls, affords us a reserve of strength and grace which is given us according to our need.

We must be very blind to our own needs and to the dangers of this world if we do not see how expedient it is for us to get as much of the grace of God as we can—of sanctifying grace, which is the life of our soul and our title to everlasting glory; and of actual grace, which is the supernatural help of

God in performing actions that merit heaven. Now, holy communion is the means by which we can draw down on ourselves the exceeding generosity of God. To obtain the daily supply of God's grace which will give us light and strength for every day, we should receive daily, if we can, the Food of Souls.

PARDON FOR DAILY SINS

We have need also of pardon for our daily offenses and to be cleansed of the stains of every day. A blessed effect of holy communion is to atone for the temporal punishment of our sins and free our souls from the stains of our offenses. We shall be wise, then, to receive daily, so as to be rid of our daily blemishes. This is what St. Augustine meant when he said: "You sin every day, therefore receive communion every day."

There are, of course and inevitably, some difficulties in the way of frequent and daily communion. It is not easy to get up betimes and take oneself off to church. Getting breakfast a little early or a little late is trying on some constitutions—until they grow accustomed to it—and then, again, the hours for Mass are not always as convenient as they might be, and it is sometimes a long way to the church. These are undoubted difficulties, and if we are not brave and loving enough they will discourage us. But the true lover of frequent communion does not surrender to such obstacles. A little ingenuity to adapt oneself to the opportunity, a little courage to pay the cost, and one can almost always get very often to holy communion, even though it is not possible to go literally every day.

Such reflections should strengthen every Sodalist in the resolve to observe the pleading of the rule for frequent and, if possible, daily communion. Nor

should one confine one's activities in this regard to personal practice and the giving of good example. An active apostolate for the encouragement of frequent communion on the part of others is also the work of the Sodalist. Prayer and the offering of one's good works and sufferings for the spread of this holy practice, the distribution of pamphlets and leaflets on the subject, and a timely word now and then to encourage it in others belong to this apostolate.

CHAPTER XXV

A PARTICULAR DEVOTION

"THE Blessed Virgin Mary is the principal patroness of the Sodality of Our Lady. Hence the Sodalists should make profession of a particular devotion to her and strive to imitate her splendid virtues, place all confidence in her, and urge one another on to love and serve her with filial devotedness." (Rule 40.)

A LIFE AND A VOCATION

The Sodality has a charming and attractive breadth of purpose and scope of fervor. It goes deep into one's life and opens up wide fields of holy effort. Beginning with devotion to the most blessed Mother of God, it uses this powerful appeal to stir the Sodalist to a life consecrated to the imitation of the Blessed Virgin, and sets the soul walking in her footsteps—which follow so closely the footsteps of her Son—in the way of personal holiness, the help of the neighbor, and the defense of the Church. Thus, properly understood, the Sodality is a way of life and a vocation. It is the faithful and loving imitation of Mary, which is the closest imitation of Christ. He has set us an example the most beautiful and most perfect that heart could desire, and she has shown us how to imitate Him. We might despair and fall off from our good desires did we not see her, so faithful, so unblemished, yet so loving and so human, walking close to Him and beckoning us to follow.

THE IMITATION OF MARY

We do not realize, nor shall we until we get to heaven, what it means to have the encouragement, the leadership and protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is an immense honor to our human nature to have one mere human being of whom we can be unreservedly proud, in whom there can be found not the slightest stain either original or wrought, who has corresponded perfectly to God's grace, fulfilled the highest ideal of her Creator, pleased Him perfectly in all her ways. The Virgin Mother offers, to all ages, a living proof of the possibilities for nobleness and holiness that are in our human nature. It is the blessed office of the Sodality to remind us that this sweet paragon of our race is meant not only for honor because she is the holy Mother of God, but for imitation because she is the humble daughter of man. Our highest service to her and to her divine Son is the filial, faithful, persevering copying of her glorious but most imitable holiness. This is the supreme service of the Sodality and its most sublime achievement, to remind us and encourage us to imitate the Blessed Virgin.

A DEVOTION FOR CHILDREN

We cannot begin too soon to plant in the hearts of the Sodalists this holy thirst to be like the Blessed Mother, "to imitate," as the rule exhorts, "her splendid virtues." The little children who are admitted into the Sodality in the schools, must have this ideal clearly presented to their pure minds and deeply graven on their affectionate hearts. There are so many avenues of comprehension by which these little ones, the novices of the Sodality, may be made to understand their sweet duty to honor and to imitate

their Virgin Mother in Heaven. All the lovely imagery of home, with which they are so familiar, may be drawn on to explain and illustrate the tenderness and kindness of her who is their Mother in heaven and who keeps for them there a place in her heavenly home. By vivid instances and comparisons they should be given in their tender years an intimate and personal devotion to Mary, "their other Mother," so that the thought of her may be as familiar to them as that of their mothers on earth. The watchfulness and care of their earthly mother may be used to suggest and explain to them and to make real and vivid to their minds the watchfulness of that other and even more kind and loving Mother who guards them constantly in heaven.

THE DIRECTOR'S VOCATION

It is, of course, the special privilege of mothers to print deep in the hearts of their little ones this early and lasting devotion to the Mother of God. Next comes the influence of the teacher, whose own depth and tenderness of devotion communicates itself in some unspoken way, by a happy contagion, to the heart of the child under his care. Devotion is a thing to be lived rather than spoken. Therefore the teacher who will best impart this active and eager devotion to Mary is the one who fosters it most warmly and most deeply in heart and in life. The Director of the Sodality has in particular the vocation and the profession to stir up in those under his charge devotion to the Queen of the Sodality, and his success in his office and the true prosperity of the exterior works of his Sodality will both be in proportion to his own personal devotion to the Blessed Mother and to the untiring and ingenious diligence with which he communicates it to others.

CHILDREN'S SODALITIES

Those who have charge of the children's Sodalities are working with the dearest and most precious flowers in Our Lady's garden. It is a charming task to twine these little hearts so firmly about the knowledge and love of their Mother in heaven that no storm of passion or pleasure can ever shake them loose in after years. "Once a Sodalist, always a Sodalist" never has a deeper meaning than when one speaks it over and over again to these little innocents. For, it means that if they are faithful in the Sodality of their Blessed Mother, they will keep, even to the gates of heaven, the same fresh innocence which is the charm of their youth, and prolong to all eternity in heaven that spotless purity and trustful love of God which they bring as children into the Sodality.

THE GROWING CHILD

The growing boy and girl just beginning to live with a conscious and individual life and to explore with more curious minds the various and interesting and friendly-seeming world, how very much they need to be made devout and faithful imitators of the Blessed Virgin! For them faithful and persevering membership in the Sodality is the securest shield against the insidious perils of the world. It is a compendium of youthful duty and goodness faithfully to keep the rules of the Sodality, to guard its spirit, pursue its ideals, live its life. Those who have charge of the young need do no more than make them faithful Sodalists and fill them with the spirit of perseverance which is expressed in the saying, "Once a Sodalist, always a Sodalist." They may then rest assured that the love and imitation of the Most Blessed Virgin will be for them a compendium of Christian living and a

safeguard against the dangers of life. The recommendations of the rules, well understood and loyally observed, will form them after the model of their virgin Mother.

Frequent communion, the daily examination of their conscience, regular and fervent prayer, the avoidance of evil companionship, of bad reading and immoral plays, and of all occasions of scandal or disedification, the practice of daily mental prayer, regular attendance at the meetings of the Sodality, participation in the work of the sections for the help of the neighbor and the spread and defense of the Church, the exercise of zeal in private, in spiritual and corporal works of mercy, brotherly charity toward all and especially toward the members of the Sodality—all these things are expressly recommended in the rules as ways of imitating the Blessed Virgin. If they are well and practically explained to the Sodalists during their days at school, and if these boys and girls are deeply inspired with the fervent loyalty that will make them faithful to these practices for life, who cannot see that their safety and holiness is ensured both for life and in death and for eternity?

FOR OLDER FOLK

For those also who are more advanced in years and have already entered upon the struggle of life, the Sodality is, to use the quaint language of its eulogist of other days, an ark of safety from the deluge of temptation and of sin, if only they too learn to imitate the beloved Queen and Mother of the Sodality. The invocation of the Blessed Virgin, the following of her example, is for all a short cut to holiness. If in the instructions of Directors of Sodalities clear, moving explanations of the rules are given, as a guide to the imitation of the Mother of God; if the Sodal-

ists are taught to show a high loyalty to the traditions of the Sodality in her honor and to be faithful to the rules for her sake, they will keep firm in every temptation. They will not only make a glorious success of their own lives for the kingdom of heaven, but strengthen by their good influence and example all with whom they live.

HELP FOR THE LAITY

The way of salvation is sufficiently plain and well defined, but it is hard for human nature to walk straight toward heaven without companionship. In the holy life of religion the strength of the vows and the company of many others who have taken the same high obligation and are following the same way are an immense encouragement. The directions of wise superiors give strength and sureness to one's steps. But the laity are also in need of this encouragement of good company, the help of good example, and steady and wise guidance, to keep their steps straight toward heaven. The Sodality, under the direction of a prudent and zealous priest, supplies what they need.

CHAPTER XXVI

EVEN IN PRIVATE

"LET all be careful, as far as they can, to exercise their zeal even in private in spiritual and corporal works of mercy, and especially by drawing to the Sodality those whom they deem fit. In this way, each Sodalist will be a true apostle of the Divine Glory and of His Blessed Mother." (Rule 43.)

THEIR PERSONAL APOSTOLATE

This rule points out to the Sodalists what one may call their private and unofficial field of apostleship. They are directed in other paragraphs of the rules to take part as far as possible in the public and organized work of the Sodality. They are to enroll themselves in the sections for the promotion of personal holiness, the help of the neighbor, and the defense of the Church. They are to share in the activities of the academies, which make for the moral and intellectual training of the Sodalist. But in this significant little paragraph they are exhorted to exercise their zeal even in private in the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, and especially by drawing to the Sodality those who, as they think, will make good Sodalists.

DONE AS TO CHRIST

It is a great prerogative of the Christian religion to throw about the ordinary and common life of Catholics a sublime and thrilling consecration. The slight-

est action done in the name of Our Lord for the benefit of the least and worst of human kind is transfigured by Our Lord's own promise into an act of personal service to the God made Man. So insignificant a good work as the giving of a cup of cold water in His name is diligently counted by the angels, and shall not lose its especial reward throughout the eternal day of heaven. This fact, that Our Lord takes as done to Himself whatever good we do to our neighbor in His name, fills even the most commonplace life with amazing opportunities.

To have been able to give Our Lord even a little personal service during the time that He walked on earth was, we all can readily see, an astonishing privilege. If we had been drawing water at a wayside well of Palestine and had been approached by the weary and thirsty Apostles, covered with dust, tired out from their long walking, with Our Lord in the midst of them, craving of us a drink of cold water, we should have been thrilled with delight, and have counted it the most blessed hour of our lives when we could offer a drink to the thirsty Saviour. If it had been possible for us, as it was for the holy women, to go about after Our Lord and the apostles, ministering to them, cooking their food when they were hungry and drawing water to quench their thirst, we should have thought it a marvelous opportunity.

LIMITLESS OPPORTUNITIES

Our Lord lived on earth for such a short time and in such an obscure and contemptible part of the world, that only a very few had such occasions of ministering to Him Of those few, fewer still accepted their singular opportunity. But we, literally and in the exact meaning of the word, can make our whole lives a

direct personal service, a ministering to the needs of Christ. Christ walks continually with us in the necessities of our fellow men. What we do to them, either of good or evil, He takes as done personally to Him. Viewed from this standpoint, every hour of our lives is crowded with almost painfully great chances. In word and in action, in a thousand easy ways, through many seemingly insignificant works of mercy, we can continually soothe the sorrows of Christ, meet His needs, and minister to His necessities.

THE INSPIRATION OF THE SAINTS

It is this thought that has made the saints so self-forgetful and so full of untiring zeal in the service of their fellow men. They forget themselves and their own needs because they see all about them the needy Christ, hungry with the hungry, naked with the naked, sick in the sick, imprisoned in the unfortunate, suffering in a thousand ways and craving their relief and their daily ministrations. This is the explanation of the amazing activities of the saints. They saw before them, not a mere crowd of undistinguished men and women, most of them suffering from their own vices and getting less than their deserts; they saw before them Christ, afflicted under many guises, Christ in His wounded members, needy, desolate, appealing, He who gives us all that we possess, either of wealth, or health, or joy, or hope. They were untiring in the service of their neighbor because their noble hearts longed untiringly thus to show their great love to the Lover of mankind, to repay to the Supreme Benefactor some part of what He had given them.

We should take up in the same spirit that personal and hidden service of our neighbor recommended in the rule of the Sodality. In small ways, by faithful

acts of kindness, sympathy, and mercy, we should be always industriously busy ministering to Christ in the person of others. If we see with the eye of faith, if our conviction is indeed sincere that in helping others we help Christ Himself, we shall never lack enthusiasm and inspiration. It is astonishing that so many good people seem to miss so pitifully the meaning of these words of Our Lord, "As long as you did it to one of My least brethren, you did it to Me." That sentence, properly understood, transforms the universe. A vigorous and constant faith in the truth of Christ's saying will make our lives an exercise of heroic charity toward others.

WHEN LITTLE THINGS ARE GREAT

Neither can we exempt ourselves from striving for the help of our neighbor because we are insignificant and can do only a little. Our least action acquires a plenteous merit and dignity because of the infinite and adorable Person to whom it is directed. No service is trifling which is rendered to a great king, for he rewards small service greatly, not for the sake of the service, but for the sake of his own great dignity. So, everything that we do for our neighbor for the sake of Christ, is sublimely important though it seem only a trifle; for it is a service rendered to the King of Kings. Again, the help of our neighbor for the love of Christ, will have an immense reward because of the very generosity and goodness of the Sacred Heart. The King of Kings has the heart of a king, and He esteems, in the thrilling phrase of the Imitation of Christ, rather the love of the giver than the gift of the lover. Piercing to the depth of our actions, He looks into the heart, and if He sees there a royal motive for an insignificant action, He takes the act for a royal service and repays it royally.

WHERE ALL MAY BE HEROIC

We need only, therefore, to be sure of having a good intention of helping others for the love of Christ, and the least of our actions will be splendidly meritorious. This is one of the blessed characteristics of the Catholic Faith, that it opens the doors of heroic achievement to all mankind. To be sublimely great in natural pursuits is the opportunity of the very few, because to excel greatly in such pursuits requires rare talent and unusual gifts of body and of mind. The Catholic Faith opens the door of heroic achievement to everyone who will follow the teachings of Christ. To be greatly heroic it is only necessary to cling close to Our Lord and serve Him faithfully in little things with a great love.

There is good reason, then, for putting among the rules of the Sodality this exhortation to the Sodalists to be "careful as far as they can to exercise their zeal, even in private, in the spiritual and corporal works of mercy." In this way, as the rule declares, each Sodalist will be a true apostle of the Divine Glory and of His Blessed Mother, for the Divine Glory shone out for thirty years through the most obscure and, to our sight, insignificant manual labor. The blessed Mother of God, imitating her Son, hid her supreme sanctity in the everyday duties of a poor man's wife and the mother of a lowly family. She indeed exercised her zeal in private, in spiritual and corporal works of mercy. Yet those lowly works of mercy, done purely for the love of her divine Son, made up a life of the most supreme and matchless heroism and sanctity. It is thus almost as easy as it is glorious to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and Mary and to make our lives full of works of zeal "even in private in spiritual and corporal works of mercy."

CHAPTER XXVII

"WITH BROTHERLY LOVE"

"THEY should deal with one another with brotherly love and Christian charity, and often pray to God our Lord for the needs of the Sodality and of the Sodalists, and especially of the sick. When a Sodalist passes to a better life, let those who can do so attend his funeral, and let all in private offer prayers for his eternal rest. Besides this, they shall recite in common for him the Office of the Dead or other prayers, and have Holy Mass said, thus securing for him the indulgence of a privileged altar." (Rule 45.)

THE LAW OF LOVE

Our Lord summed up all the Law and the Prophets in the two great commandments of love—love of God and love of the neighbor. In like manner, then, all the duty of Sodalists toward one another is summarized by the rule in the brief sentence quoted above: "They should deal with one another with brotherly love and Christian charity." The very word "Sodality" comes from a Latin term that means a close comrade and helper. The Sodality is thus by its very name a society of brotherly love, of constant kindness and Christian charity. To be a thoroughly good Sodalist and worthy the name, one must be full of practical helpfulness and sociable goodness toward one's fellow Sodalists.

A SAD NEGLECT OF CHARITY

It is deeply regrettable that in too many Sodalities this mutual charity in dealing with one another is little in evidence. Through a neglect of the rules and an ignorance of the true spirit of the Sodality, members have little to do with one another outside of the occasions when they come together for the recitation of the Office and for the monthly communion. To see them coming and going, one never would suspect that they belong to an association whose very name speaks of the warmest Christian charity, whose members are enrolled in the special and intimate family of the Blessed Mother of God and are therefore in a particular way brothers and sisters to one another, and whose spirit throughout the three and a half centuries of its existence has been one of intimate and cordial friendliness among its members, inspired by their common love of their Blessed Queen.

THE UNION OF PRAYER

Moreover, the rule does not content itself merely with general directions to the Sodalists to love and cherish one another. It goes on to suggest definite practices of brotherly charity. The first one is "often to pray to God our Lord for the needs of the Sodality and of the Sodalists and especially of the sick." Our Sodalities may practice tender and efficacious work of charity by constant and mutual intercession for one another's need. Every Sodality should encourage its members to offer up their prayers and good works in a special manner for the needs of all the other Sodalities and of Sodalists throughout the world. At the same time, its own members partake in a special way in the prayers and good works of other Sodalists.

CHARITY TO DECEASED SODALISTS

"When a Sodalist passes to a better life," the rule continues, "let those who can do so attend his funeral, and let all in private offer prayers for his eternal rest." To bury the dead is one of the corporal works of mercy, and it is the last bodily service that we can render to a friend. Hence, when a noted man dies, his associates in business leave their offices and put off important engagements in order to be present at the funeral. Much more should the Sodalists go to some little trouble, if need be, to attend the burial of a deceased member of the Sodality; and, wherever possible, special seats should be provided and medals or badges worn so that all may see how faithful is the Sodality to its dead who die in the Lord. If this were more attended to in practice, the membership of the Sodalities would notably increase. It is human to wish some remembrance and ceremony after death, and our Holy Faith itself teaches us the power of the prayers of the living to help the dead. By being faithful to this wise and loving provision of the rule, our Sodalists will not only do a blessed work of charity, but will as well draw others to the service of the Blessed Mother of God. Even those who cannot attend the funeral should be very careful to remember to "offer prayers in private for the eternal rest" of the departed Sodalist. A tender heart cannot think without pain and regret of the soul of a fellow member of the Sodality sunk in the sorrowful gulf of purgatory and pining for the vision of God when a few acts of generous self-sacrifice offered for that poor soul, or some easy and brief indulgenced ejaculations would hasten its joyful entrance into heaven.

THE OFFICE OF THE DEAD

Finally, "besides this, they shall recite in common for him the Office of the Dead or other prayers, and have Holy Mass said, thus securing for him the indulgence of a privileged altar." To arrange for this is the duty of the Director and officers of the Sodality, and they should attend to it with a charitable promptness. It is to be remembered that these acts of brotherly love and Christian charity toward the sick and deceased members of the Sodality have attached to them rich indulgences, which can be found in detail in the appendix to the Rules of 1910. But the duty of Sodalists toward departed members deserves a chapter for itself.

Such are the detailed instructions of the rules for works of brotherly helpfulness. But in the sections of the Sodality there is room for an endless variety of works of mutual charity. Indeed, almost any work which is needed or in which local circumstances suggest the coöperation of the Sodalists with one another may be taken up by a section, in honor of the Blessed Virgin.

SOCIABILITY FOR THE YOUNG

Chief among the works of brotherly love which the times require is the promotion of sociability among Catholic young people and the friendly welcoming of those who come as strangers to the parish or to the city. Few of those who have not made special and careful studies in this matter realize the acute dangers to the faith and even to decent morals that lurk in wait for the lonely young folk in our cities. Starved for company and weary and jaded with work, how many a Catholic boy and girl has wandered into dangerous places of amusement and been ruined body and

soul for want of a little ready and forehanded sociability from those of their own Faith who could have helped them! We have been told with bitterness, even by members of Sodalities, of the coldness which they met with from the very members of the Sodality themselves. There was no effort made to welcome the newcomer. A hard and selfish spirit of exclusiveness chilled the air of the meetings. The members came evidently with the intention of getting what they could of spiritual profit from the Sodality, and of giving as little as they could of mutual kindness and brotherly love. Social exclusiveness was rampant. Everyone was looking up the ladder of caste and clique, trying to have as much as possible to do with those above and as little as possible to do with those whom they considered below. This is laughable in any gathering, but it is scandalous in a Sodality meeting. The infliction of such an atmosphere of unchristian coldness on a young man or woman who enters the parish a stranger, sick and sore with loneliness, and longing for some kindly associates to take the place of the home just left behind, is worse than thoughtless—it is cruel. By practicing the rule of brotherly charity and Christian kindness toward those who are lonely or friendless, the Sodalist can greatly serve the Church as well as honor the Mother of all the lonely and unbefriended.

KINDNESS TOWARD OLDER FOLK

We shall find too that many of the old residents of the parish to whom we could be friendly with a little effort, are as remote from us as though they lived in Timbuctoo. If we make the first advances, they will in all likelihood be pleased and will respond; and even if they do not, we shall at least have done our part and have practiced a very important part of the

duty of a good Sodalist. Even among the number of our friends and daily associates there are constant opportunities of putting in practice this rule of the Sodality. For if we look a bit sharply, we shall see many a chance to do a good turn which we have been neglecting.

There are some who seem born with a talent for kindness, and to whom it is delightfully natural to discover and to do a variety of kind and graceful things. They possess both tact and generosity. It is easy for them to see what will be agreeable and helpful to others, and pleasant for them to carry out the kind things of which they think. Such characters are to be envied. All they need to achieve the exquisite perfection of that brotherly love and Christian charity recommended by the rule is to sanctify their kindness by a pure intention and offer it up to God in honor of the Queen of Heaven.

THE CONSTANT EFFORT TO BE KIND

But there are others whose heart is by nature hard, whose disposition is slow to kindness or compassion, and who do kind deeds awkwardly, when they do them at all, or who fail utterly to perceive the need of helping others in the delicate and tactful ways which aid so much to smooth over misfortune and encourage effort. It is for these that the rule of brotherly love is of most significance and value. They should begin at once and make it one of the great efforts of their lives to be in all things kind and brotherly. It will take a long series of serious efforts, careful self-examinations, and manful struggles; and they will fail often, and often be discouraged and prone to give up in despair.

Even their most earnest attempts may seem to give them very little results in the way of actual accom-

plishment, and after years of effort they may find themselves apparently no farther advanced toward spontaneous and genial kindness than they were when first they entered the Sodality. Still, they must never grow discouraged. It is no small task to change one's character, and a work of no little time and pains. But the struggle is meritorious. Not only they who triumph, but they who fight are crowned. The very fact that one is honestly trying to keep the rule that speaks of brotherly love is reason enough for rejoicing. There are, alas, too many who by joining the Sodality have taken upon themselves the honorable obligation of this rule but who never take any pains to try to keep it.

SERVICE TO OUR KING AND QUEEN

Finally, it will help very much to courage and perseverance in the following of this rule if we remember the wonderful saying of Our Lord, that He will account as done to Him whatever we do to our neighbor. The least deed of kindness or helpfulness has, therefore, an amazing value for heaven, for it is a personal service to the King. Whatever acts of brotherly love we perform as members of the Sodality and as faithful children of the Queen of Heaven must also have a special merit and value in His eyes, because they are done in the service of His own Mother.

CHAPTER XXVIII

MUTUAL INTERCESSION

"THEY should . . . often pray to God our Lord for the needs of the Sodality and of the Sodalists, and especially of the sick." (Rule 45.)

THE KINDNESS OF PRAYER

This rule very wisely emphasizes the duty of the Sodalists to pray for their fellow Sodalists throughout the world. It is a great charity, a precious help to others, to pray for them. Other deeds of kindness, corporal works of mercy, the rendering visible and tangible assistance, may appeal more to the imagination, and give us a greater sense of having benefited them. But when we give our neighbor some material service we make him the recipient of our poor, limited bounty; when we pray for him we open up for him the treasury of God. We Americans, being an active and vigorous people, are sometimes more inclined to exterior works of charity than to prayer. We had rather be doing than praying, not realizing that fervent prayer is, in truth, the most noble and effective deed. If a friend of a great king were to go about himself giving small alms to the poor, that would be something; but if he should speak a word in the ear of the king and obtain a royal largess of alms, that would be a still more fruitful deed of mercy. When we pray for others, we obtain for them the kingly alms of God.

MOST PLEASING TO GOD

Moreover, praying for others is not only a service to those for whom we pray. It likewise gives great pleasure to God and brings great benefit to ourselves. We are so needy, and there are so many things which we have occasion to ask for ourselves, that there is something touching and heroic in turning from our own wants to pray for the necessities of others. God loves charity, kindness, and a tender heart; hence when we pray for our neighbor we touch His fatherly love and make Him the more inclined to help ourselves. Besides, in praying for others, we make our own heart greater and more tender. It is a natural instinct of our poor fallen nature to think only of ourselves, plan and seek for ourselves, or for those who are so near to us that our love for them has in it an element of self. But when we pray for others and beseech God for His help in their necessities, lovingly presenting to Him their trials and difficulties, we broaden our sympathy, enlarge our compassion, and open our hearts to the sorrows of the whole world.

St. Teresa bade her Sisters pray for the needs of others, especially of the priests of God, even though they forgot their own necessities, for she assured them that when God saw them intent on helping others He would be very ready to help themselves. Indeed, the very act of praying for the needs of others is an exercise of the most noble and lofty powers of our heart and soul. We practice love of God and confidence in Him, acknowledge His supreme dominion, exercise faith and hope and confidence in His divine assistance. These things we do whenever we pray. But in praying for others we use, besides, the divine facul-

ties of compassion, sympathy, and tenderness. We feel the needs of others, are mindful of their afflictions, yearning that God may console them, and asking His goodness and mercy for them. Hence prayer for others has the effect of purifying the heart, enlarging it, and making it sensible of others' needs.

A CHRIST-LIKE CHARITY

Another reason why Sodalists are exhorted so especially to pray for their fellow Sodalists throughout the world is that in so doing they resemble in a special way Christ and His Blessed Mother. For these two most perfect of all human beings prayed most of all for the needs of others. Our Lord was from the instant of His incarnation interceding for all mankind, whom He had come to save. In the silence of Nazareth, in the quiet days of His hidden life, in the nights that He spent in prayer, in the Garden of Gethsemane, during the laborious days of His public mission, Our Lord was offering intercession for us, beseeching the Heavenly Father to consider our needs and our weaknesses, fortifying us by the power of His appeal. The Blessed Mother of God imitated so perfectly her divine Son; how constantly, then, she seconded Him in His incessant intercession! She prayed with Him for us all, from the time she first laid Him in the manger until the time when she took Him again into her arms from the cross. She prayed with Him through the days of her exile when He had gone to heaven, and prays with Him now throughout the bright days of eternity. In interceding for others, compassionating their misfortunes, pleading with God for His mercy on men, we approach most nearly to the Saviour of men and His Most Blessed Mother.

PRAYER FOR CHILD SODALISTS

There are so many motives to move us to fervent prayer for our fellow Sodalists! At this time an immense multitude of bright-faced Catholic children in many nations are in their school days, during which they are to be formed in mind and heart to serve God faithfully all their lives. What a vast crowd there are of young Sodalists, boys and girls, in their youthful beauty, fresh and innocent, the precious treasures of the Church, the flowers of Christ's garden, the lambs of His flock! We should pray for these fellow Sodalists, that God may guard their innocence, that the Blessed Mother may lead them in holy ways, and that they may be kept from the temptations of the world, which enter everywhere and are now most alluring. We should beseech heaven for these little ones that they may become all that God and His Blessed Mother desire.

PRAYER FOR OUR YOUTH

At the same time that these little fellow Sodalists of ours are entering school, another immense band is leaving school for good to go into the world. They have received the best that Catholic schools can give them. They are prepared, but, alas, not insured, against the dangers of the world. They know the way, but it is hard to keep. At the door of the school the world, the flesh, and the devil wait to invite them to choose the wide gate and the easy path. Let us pray that Christ and His angels may assist them and that many a good Catholic man and woman may be found to take the angels' side in helping them past the days of warm passions, bright hopes and alluring pleasures, until they have set their feet firmly and steadfastly on the narrow way of the

service and love of God. Many a fervent hour of prayer may be spent in thinking of the needs of our boys and girls, in school and out, and in pleading to God to guard them.

FOR YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN

But we must remember, too, the vast number of our fellow Sodalists, young men and young women, who are already in the thick of life and are battling for a foothold, struggling to hold to their ideals while they keep body and soul together, and to go on faithfully serving God in the face of a world that resists and distracts them. Let us pray in particular for those of our fellow Sodalists who are young men and young women alone and adrift in a strange city, so that God may raise up for them helpers and friends. Many of them find their ways laid in dark and treacherous places. It is so easy to go wrong, so hard to keep right. The lessons they learned in Catholic schools seem far away and dim, whereas the rude school of the world is continually endeavoring to teach them things that are not of Christ. Let us pray for them, even from afar, sustaining and cheering them with the grace that God will give them for our prayers.

PRAYER FOR DIVERS NECESSITIES

Then, if we look abroad, what a huge field for our charitable prayers does the whole world offer, with its red battlefields and its blackened cities, where war and desolation, bereavement, agony and every sort of sorrow are trying the souls of men! Let us pray for the destitute poor who live in a state of unnatural suspense and fear, their nerves taut with apprehension, the dull monotony of their lives starving their spirits. Only God can be their refuge and their con-

solation. Let us pray for the sick in the hospitals, that they may bear their suffering and merit by it. In particular let us pray for the dying, that God may be with them in that last hour and take them from the crimson pain that they are suffering, to the white peace of heaven. The widows and orphans, and those also who know not whether or no they are widows or orphans, because for months and years they have had no word of the father and husband that is gone; those who are allured to seek relief from their misfortune and grief in riot and license; and those who are most sorely tempted amidst their pain—all these fellow Sodalists have a special claim on our prayers.

THE GREAT NEED FOR PRAYER

Who can find it hard to pray if only he recalls the too vast need for intercession which even these few words can bring before us? Picture to yourself the world, agonized and in distress, and your heart will break forth in spontaneous prayer to God. Words are not needed. The yearning of a devout and loving heart is a loud cry in the ears of God. Dwelling on these multiplied needs and almost infinite distresses, how our own petty sorrows dwindle away before us. What are our griefs beside the grief of these suffering millions, and what is our endurance compared to theirs? Thus, again, prayer for others brings solace to our personal woes.

CHAPTER XXIX

WHEN A SODALIST DIES

"WHEN a Sodalist passes to a better life, let those who can do so attend the funeral, and let all in private offer prayers for his eternal rest. Besides this, they shall recite in common for him the Office of the Dead or other prayers, and have Holy Mass said, thus gaining for him the indulgences of a privileged altar." (Rule 45.)

Here is a paragraph of the rules ever most seasonable to call to mind. Indeed, one wishes that all Sodalists, and all Sodalities as well, would make a special examination of their conscience on their treatment of departed associates and members. For, sad to say, we are, all of us, too prone to neglect and to forget the Holy Souls.

OUR CRUEL THOUGHTLESSNESS

It is cruel of us to be so thoughtless of the needs of the suffering souls in purgatory, for they depend on us in a pitiful way for aid. They cannot any longer help themselves. But we can help them so easily and so efficaciously by hearing Mass, offering prayers and communions, and by gaining indulgences for them, that it is a shame and a sorrow if we will not take the trouble to rescue them from their agony of longing and pain.

This is true of all the souls in purgatory. They are all our fellow members in the Church of Christ—we

in the Church militant, they in the Church suffering—they all will be our friends and companions throughout a glorious eternity. But of our fellow Sodalists who are in purgatory it may be said that they have a special claim upon our aid. They entered the Sodality, made themselves members of the family of the Blessed Virgin, tried to observe the rules during their life, and they have a right to expect from us the observance of the rule that bids us pray for them now that they are dead. If we neglect that holy office in their regard, what can we ourselves expect when we in our turn fall into the hands of God's justice and are plunged into those cleansing fires? How eager we shall then be to have all the Sodalists in the world observe this rule!

THE FUNERAL OF A SODALIST

Let us have, therefore, an examination of conscience on the part of all our Sodalities as to their conduct toward the Holy Souls. First of all, when a Sodalist dies, all his companions who can do so should be present at the funeral in a body, wearing their medals or badges, and should receive holy communion for the deceased, either at the funeral Mass or at an earlier one. After the Mass is over some prayers should be offered up in common for the repose of the departed soul, and announcement may be made on this occasion as to when the Office of the Dead will be said. The careful carrying out of this work of mercy will not only help the departed, it will also edify the living and draw new members to the Sodality when they see how carefully it cares for its dead. The medal of the Sodality may likewise be put upon the deceased Sodalist, and if the pallbearers are Sodalists, they also may wear their medals during the services.

PRAYER FOR DECEASED MEMBERS

Besides, "Let all in private offer prayers for his eternal rest." Every Sodalist should make haste to acquire the holy habit of praying very frequently for the dying and the dead. The charity of intercessory prayer is most pleasing to Almighty God, who loves to see us merciful toward one another. It is so easy to exercise! There is a host of indulgenced ejaculations which we can offer up for the Poor Souls. "My Jesus, mercy!" "Sweet Heart of Jesus, be my love; sweet Heart of Mary, be my salvation," "Jesus meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Thine," "Sweetest Heart of Jesus, I implore that I may ever love Thee more and more." These and many others should be often on our lips, and each one will greatly assist the souls in purgatory.

Besides the saying of indulgenced prayers there are many other means of helping the Holy Souls by our private devotion. Every small act of penance that we perform for their benefit is most efficacious in appeasing God's justice in their regard and shortening their time of pain. Small mortifications in food, subduing vanity in dress, giving little alms instead of spending money on our own whims and fancies, foregoing some favorite amusement now and then, repressing the sharp reply, speaking words of gentleness and charity, performing any one of the spiritual or corporal works of mercy, doing another's will when we want our own way—all these things will help mightily if we offer them up for the Holy Souls. Prayer, almsgiving, penance, good works—we should each one make definite resolutions as to what we shall do for the poor sufferers in purgatory. May God grant us the grace to form habits of praying for and

helping them that shall last all our lives. We shall very soon be there ourselves in the place of unspeakable yearning, homesick for the face of God, and longing for the help of our fellow Sodalists to help us quickly to heaven.

PRAYERS IN COMMON FOR THE DEAD

The rule goes on to speak of the exercises which the Sodality should hold in common for each of its departed members. "As soon as possible after a Sodalist has died the others shall recite in common for him the Office of the Dead or other prayers." This Office of the Dead is taken from the Breviary and is composed, like the other Offices in this official prayer-book of the Church, of psalms, antiphons, supplications, and readings from Holy Scripture. As it takes about an hour to recite the entire Office, Sodalists usually say only a part of it. The hour of Lauds, which requires from ten to fifteen minutes, has been published on cards for convenience in reciting it in common. It would be well if the Director were to give a brief explanation of the Office before recitation, pointing out the appropriateness of the psalms and antiphons, the significance of the readings and the prayers. As the official prayer of the Church for her departed children the Office of the Dead has an especial fitness for private recitation also, when we wish to pray for the souls of our departed relatives and friends. Finally, it is directed in the rule that the Sodality, through the officers of course, should have a Mass said, thus securing for the deceased, by a special favor granted to Sodalists, the indulgence of a privileged altar—a plenary indulgence, details about which may be found in *The Raccolta.*

REMEMBRANCES OF DEPARTED SODALISTS

In addition to these pious practices, devotion and charity will suggest other ways of remembering and helping the departed members of the Sodality, who have so special a claim upon our charity. The printing of neat but inexpensive memorial cards, which each member may insert in his prayer-book, the keeping in a prominent place in the Sodality chapel of a permanent and nicely arranged list of deceased members, the recitation at every meeting of special prayers for the departed Sodalists and for all members of the Sodality who have died throughout the world—all these are helps to devotion toward the Suffering Souls. The Director, especially during the month of November, and on the occasion of the death of a Sodalist, will not fail to give instructions concerning this rule of the Sodality.

We suggest most earnestly, as a work of charity toward the Holy Souls which we should like every Sodalist to undertake, the promotion of the blessed custom of offering spiritual bouquets of Holy Masses said and heard, of communions and prayers, instead of great heaps of flowers, for which so much money is spent even at Catholic funerals. Some blossoms, few and simple, become a Christian burial. But how it must grieve the dead to know that while large sums are squandered in buying perishable blossoms to deck the dead and senseless body, so little money or thought is given to securing fragrant blossoms of Holy Masses to console and refresh the agonized poor soul already beginning its bitter dole of purgatory!

THE EFFICACY OF ALMSGIVING

Finally, we should remember that the giving of alms is a work of charity most pleasing to God, and,

therefore, when offered in their behalf, most helpful to the Suffering Souls. What must be the merit in God's sight of almsgiving to the foreign missions, in particular, where a few dollars given in support of missionaries, catechists, or children in the orphanages, will bring such great fruit to the Church in these pagan lands. We trust, therefore, that the devotion of all Sodalists to the help of their deceased members will steadily increase, and that their prayers and good works will be offered up in growing measure for the repose of their fellow Sodalists who are now suffering the inexpressible pains of purgatory.

CHAPTER XXX

"THAT FERVENT CATHOLIC LIFE"

"WHEREVER they are, they should with exact fidelity lead that fervent Catholic life which is becoming in good Sodalists of Our Lady." (Rule 47.)

This present rule speaks in particular of those Sodalists who find themselves removed for a time from the influence of the Sodality when they are traveling abroad or living for a while away from home. But its reminder points as well to those who stay at home. In every circumstance of life, in every situation in which they may find themselves, the members of the Sodality must keep in mind that "they should with exact fidelity lead that fervent Catholic life which is becoming in good Sodalists of Our Lady."

THE CONSECRATION OF THE SODALIST

We may sometimes be tempted to forget that entrance into the Sodality is not merely the joining of an organization. It is a consecration to the more perfect life. It is a high resolve, publicly and solemnly manifested, to be a worthy child of the Queen of Heaven, an imitator of her virtues, a follower of her example. To be a Sodalist is therefore a life, a career, a vocation. It is a dedication of oneself and of one's efforts to the leading of a fervent Catholic life in imitation of God's holy Mother.

It is well that the rules remind in particular those who are absent for a time from the regular meetings

of the Sodality, from the instructions of the Director and the good example of their fellow Sodalists, of their self-imposed task of leading a life specially in accord with Catholic faith and principle. The true Sodalist carries the Sodality with him everywhere, and is never separated from that holy fellowship by any distance, because he bears with him its very soul and substance in his own devoted fidelity to the fervent Catholic life. It was said of St. John Berchmans, himself a glorious follower of the Blessed Mother, that he so vividly embodied in his every action the rules of the Society of Jesus, to which he belonged, that even though these rules had been lost it would have been possible to rewrite them precisely merely by observing his actions. In like manner the loyal member of the Sodality should be so imbued with the spirit of the rules that one could write them over again by observing the fervor of his life. Because distance and the separation from Sodality influences is apt to cool the fervor of one's allegiance to the Sodality, it is especially necessary for those who are away, to keep this rule in mind.

A SPUR FOR ALL TO PERFECTION

No member of the Sodality should consider the teaching of this rule remote from him. It should be for all a living, constant principle and spur for all their actions, that they are expected as Sodalists to lead a more than ordinarily fervent Catholic life. One who joins the Sodality makes by that very act a profession of more than usual fervor and devotion, and is bound in honor thereafter to show forth in word and action that special piety, fidelity to principle, unworldly courage, devotion to the service of God, and the supernatural self-sacrifice which are

the elements of a truly fervent Catholic life as demanded by the rule.

Considering the wording of this rule and its interior meaning, one can understand why St. Francis de Sales ventured even to say in that oft-quoted sentence that in his opinion the Sodality is almost a Religious Order for the laity. Religious Orders owe their institution to the need of special incentives, aids, and safeguards to help their members to the observance of the three counsels of perfection—evangelical poverty, perfect chastity, and religious obedience, to which they bind themselves by vow. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to keep these vows while living the ordinary life of the world, and so the Church has approved the establishment of the various Religious Orders, societies designed in their rules, manner of life, devotions and observances, to assist their members by the benefit of association, the strength of organization, and the safeguards of direction and supervision to attain the glorious aim of the close imitation of Christ toward which Religious aspire.

"A RELIGIOUS ORDER FOR LAY FOLK"

Now, there are many devout souls in the world who for one reason or another find it impracticable to enter a Religious Order and who yet aspire to the close imitation of Our Blessed Lord. They wish to escape the pitfalls of the world, to lead a fervent Catholic life, to give themselves to devotion and to prayer, and to prepare for a blessed eternity. These men and women, too, need the benefit of association, the help of skilled direction and the encouragement of definite organization and prudent rules to guide and confirm them in the life they have chosen. The Sodality, with its rules, traditions, regular exercises of piety,

patient encouragement, experienced instruction, corporate good example, and inexhaustibly various good works, offers them just this help forward, this direction and good company which they require—offers it to them, that is, if the Sodality itself be well organized and wisely directed and if the Sodalists are trained and inspired according to the true ideals of its traditions and rules. No wonder, then, that the gentle Doctor of the Church, who himself loved the Sodality so truly, should compare it, for its shielding efficacy, its strengthening inspiration, and the method and sureness it can bring to the fervent Catholic life, to the Religious Orders themselves, the pride and glory of the Church.

THE SPIRIT OF FERVOR

Now the great efficacy and preciousness of a Religious Order lies not in the exterior regularity which it induces in its members, but in the interior fervor that it fosters. Its glory is the inward life of those who follow its rules, observe its spirit, and enjoy its inspiration. So, also, the greatest glory of the Sodality is not merely the exterior regularity and faithfulness of its members—though these are necessary conditions of its efficacious working—but their interior spirit of love of God and their neighbor, their self-sacrifice, prayer, and self-devotion in works of zeal for God, the neighbor, and the Church, in honor of God's Mother. It is the Sodality life lived by its members, the "fervent Catholic life" spoken of in the rule, that is the chief end as it is the crowning glory of the Sodality.

THE COMPARISON WITH RELIGION

One may learn many more things concerning the true spirit of the Sodality from this luminous com-

parison of the holy Doctor between the Sodality and a Religious Order. Thus, in a Religious Order it is not the number of its communities, the richness of its possessions, nor the splendor of its ceremonies and good works that makes it glorious in Catholic eyes, but the fervor of its members. So also in the Sodality, it is not the crowds who attend its meetings, nor the elegance of its chapel, nor even the numbers of its membership that make a good Sodality, but the fervent Catholic life that they lead, whether many or few. Again, in a Religious Order all things tend to and find their last fruition in the cultivation of the fervent Catholic life according to the counsels of perfection. So also in the Sodality, all exterior works, whether of charity or devotion, tend to and are meant for the intensification of and the expression of the fervent Catholic life of the Sodalists according to their state of life. All the good works, all the devotions, all the retreats, the meetings, the exercises, the instructions, the mutual good example, the Sodality publications, the innumerably various good works, have this as their last aim and final fruit, to express, intensify, encourage, and systematize the fervent Catholic life of the members.

WHAT IS REQUIRED AND SUFFICIENT

It is well to insist very much on this truth, because there are so many who seem to have wrong standards in judging of the success of Sodalities or the worthiness of Sodalists. It is required and it is sufficient for a good Sodality that it truly cultivate in its members a fervent Catholic life in honor of the Blessed Mother; and it is required and suffices for a good Sodalist that he or she truly lead such a life. All other circumstances may vary almost indefinitely; these are absolutely required for the true spirit of the

Sodality. Neither numbers are anything, nor multiplied exterior words, nor successful charities, nor eminent and numerous membership, except as all these things spring from and foster that fervent Catholic spirit, that active devotion to the Blessed Mother which it is the end of the Sodality to promote and its crown and glory to achieve.

Let all true Sodalists cling closely to the hand of that strong and tender Mother. Let them keep in mind whose children they are, under whose banner they are enrolled, whose help they enjoy, whose honor they carry always with them, beneath whose eyes they always live since they have enrolled themselves in the intimate family and among the special children of the most blessed Virgin Mary and taken her for their Queen, their Advocate, and their Mother. Encouraged by her glance and helped by her supporting hand, let them be sedulous and brave to make bloom and keep sweet, wherever they may be, in imitation of that sweet Lily of Israel, the white flower and the sweet fragrance of a fervent Catholic life.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE MAJOR OFFICERS

"AS THE Major Officers or members of the Council enjoy a dignity above the rest of the Sodalists, they should the more surpass them in the practice of virtue and in an exact observance of the rules as the office they are charged with is higher." (Rule 48.)

In the Book of Rules of 1910 we find practical instructions for the officers of the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin. In Article VII are contained rules for the officers of the Council, Article VIII speaks of the duties of the minor officers, and in Rule 65 one finds the general right given to the Director to create new officers and to define their character, prerogatives, and duties. "The major and minor officers described in these rules are those common to all Sodalities. If others are created in some Sodalities because of particular need, their character, prerogatives, and duties shall be determined by the Director of each Sodality, who alone has the right to create them." (Rule 65.)

THE CHOOSING OF OFFICERS

The first reflection that we should draw from these careful provisions of the rules is that the appointment of officers of the Sodality is neither a mere formality nor the conferring of an honorary distinction. To regard the appointment of officers as either one or the other is an abuse and an injury to the Sodality. If officers are appointed as a mere formal-

ity, without considering their fitness and willingness to do the work of their office, they will look on their duty as a mere form and will neglect the important charges imposed on them by the rules. On the other hand, if the officers are appointed merely to give some members of the Sodality honorary preferment, without regard to their fitness and zeal, a wrong is done, because such officers will in all likelihood prove incompetent, and will ruin the activities of the Sodality. We have heard of instances where the same individuals have held the office of prefect year after year though they were incompetent to discharge their duties. The Sodalists, knowing that to remove the incompetent officer would cause pain, let him stay on until the Sodality declined and almost died for want of energetic leadership. They were kind to the prefect, these Sodalists, but they were unkind to the Sodality, and the interests of the Sodality are paramount to those of the officer.

THE NEEDED QUALIFICATIONS

The requisites for good officers of the Sodality are summarized in the forty-eighth rule, quoted above. Those who surpass in the practice of virtue and in an exact observance of the rules ought to be preferred in the election of officers. Notice the significance of this description. The virtues which they should excel in are the virtues of a good Sodalist, and the rules in whose observance they should surpass are the rules of the Sodality, particularly the rules for the guidance of its officers. Therefore those should be chosen officers of the Sodality who are most competent, through their zeal and regularity, to discharge the duties of officers. It is a question not only of personal merit and goodness, but of competency and trustworthiness. An immense deal depends upon the officers. They are

the right hand of the Director in promoting the work of the Sodality. They are also charged to give edification to the other members. If the officers are not fervent, regular, and dependable, the whole Sodality will suffer.

Moreover, each particular officer should be qualified for the special work of his office. The prefect should be a good executive, full of method, perseverance, and courage, and able to inspire and direct the threefold work of the members, for their own personal holiness, the help of the neighbor, and the defense of the Church against her enemies.

These things require everlasting zeal, tact, and faithfulness. While the authority of the Director is supreme, the influence of the prefect must second his efforts, and if the prefect is sluggish, careless, or incompetent, the whole Sodality will go down. In a society like the Sodality everything depends on a proper coördination of action, so that the Director will instill enthusiasm, energy, and perseverance, at the same time leaving the Sodalists free to do their part of the work. The prefect must coöperate with the Director so as neither to conflict with his wishes and ideas nor to sacrifice personal initiative and enthusiasm. The other officers must take guidance from the Director and the prefect, and they must also manage their own departments well and do their work thoroughly, so that all will go on together like a well-trained army, each in his own way, yet marching in step, and going forward all together. This is the ideal to be striven for.

GIVING DEFINITE RESPONSIBILITY

A great point in keeping the individual officers of the Sodality up to their duty is to give each one something definite to take care of. Some of the officers

have already their own proper sphere of action. Thus in Rule 55 the duty of the secretary is laid down, and in Rule 57 the duty of the instructor of candidates, a most important office, which is neglected in too many Sodalities. No single Sodality should ever be without its instructor of candidates, and whoever is appointed to this office should regard it as a matter of honor to discharge his duties well. The treasurer is advised in Rule 58 of the duties entrusted to him. But it is likewise an excellent idea to give to the other officers some particular work of their own. Thus, the assistant prefects may be put at the head of some of the sections of the Sodality, and each member of the Council may be given charge of a section also.

THE DIVISION INTO BANDS

A good plan adopted in some Sodalities is that of dividing the members into bands with from ten to twenty in a band, and giving each consultor charge of one. The bands may then be assigned special seats at the meetings. Each consultor will be responsible for the attendance of his band, and when any one of the band fails to attend the meeting, the consultor will be urged to investigate and report the cause of absence.

ORGANIZATION THROUGH BANDS

The general work of the Sodality may be organized through these bands. Thus, for example, the head of each band can render a report of the number of communions offered up, of the contributions for the Self-Denial Fund, of the number of members obtained for the Union of Prayer, and similar activities which are engaged in by all the Sodalists. The consultor may also make it a point of pride to have at least one member from his band in each one of the sections of the Sodality, and this member may act as lieutenant of the

consultor in carrying on the particular activities of the section. Thus, for example, the band member of the Mission Section may interest all the members of the band in contributing to the missions, and collect their offerings. The band member of the Eucharistic Section may interest all in frequent communion; and so with the other activities of the Sodality.

In organizing Sodalities into these bands with consultors at the head, it may be well to give each band less than its full membership, and let the consultors and members make up the membership by getting new candidates. Thus, for example, if the full membership is fifteen, ten members may be allotted at the beginning; and if the membership is twenty, then ten or twelve may be put in each band at the start. When a band exceeds twenty another band may be formed and a new consultor appointed to lead it.

Some time before the general meeting of the Sodality, it is a good idea to have a meeting of the officers, and at this meeting plans may be discussed and policies formulated to be brought up for the approval of the members at the general meeting. At this officers' meeting the consultors and heads of bands should attend together with the other officers, and thus they will be thoroughly familiarized with the workings of the Sodality and be in a position to make any explanation necessary to the members of their band.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE INITIATIVE OF THE OFFICERS

"FAITHFUL coadjutors . . . in governing the Sodality." (Rule 49.)

The officers of the Sodality are of very great importance, and their selection and training should be made a matter of serious effort. As this rule insists, they should become "faithful coadjutors"; that is to say, faithful helpers of the Director in governing the Sodality. They should have an actual part in making the Sodality a success and should feel that upon them rests the real responsibility for Sodality progress. They should be trained and instructed until each one is able and willing competently to carry on his or her definite share of Sodality work.

THE DUE DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITY

The success of a Sodality depends in great measure upon the same principles which govern the success of any organized society. There must be in every efficient organization both a certain centralizing of authority and direction and a division of responsibility and effort. Where one person takes all the responsibility and does all the work, the task is usually too great for his powers and the work is not as well done as though many hands and minds were coöperating therein. A too great centralization of authority and responsibility deadens and discourages individual effort.

Thus, if the Director of a Sodality neglects the officers and attempts himself to carry out all the work and direct all the activities, he loses some very precious results of Sodality organization. First, he himself is too much burdened with work and cannot attend to all the necessary details so essential for success. Then, too, the Sodalists are deprived of that stimulation which comes from a division of labor. They become passive and lose interest. We are naturally inclined to grow interested in what belongs to us, in what is entrusted to our care. If some one else is doing all the managing, we let them attend to it and go our way.

IF THE DIRECTOR DOES IT ALL

Another disadvantage which follows, if the officers are not trained to do their work, each one for himself, is a lack of continuousness in the activities of the Sodality. Sometimes it happens that a very zealous Director is put in charge of a Sodality and his interest and enthusiasm makes everything hum with activity. He is the life and soul of each department of Sodality effort. He is, so to say, the prefect, secretary, librarian and the president of all the sections in one person. He makes plans and carries them out with very little help from the officers. But after a few years, perhaps in consequence of his over-activity, he breaks down and has to give up the work or he is removed to some other sphere of effort. The officers and all the Sodalists have been leaning heavily upon him. When he goes, they fall heavily to the ground. No one is able to take up and carry on the work and the Sodality becomes as inactive and moribund as it had been energetic and alive.

WHEN THE OFFICERS CARRY THE LOAD

If the Director in question had devoted his energies to training his officers, to teaching them how to stand alone and exercising them in prudent judgment and initiative, they could have carried on the Sodality for a long time and he would have been spared the wasting of his powers which might have been used for some other activity to which Sodalists cannot attend. We have always been pleased and edified to see Sodalities where the officers and members themselves carried the burden of the work. Sometimes we have found such Sodalities going along energetically, holding their meetings, developing new activities, ardent and earnest in the service of the Blessed Mother, while the Director, a busy parish priest, could scarcely do more than happen in now and again to say a word of encouragement. When he did not come, the meetings went on just the same. The prefect said the Office, or the usual prayers, the secretary read the minutes, the sections reported, unfinished and new business were taken up, plans were made to be submitted to the Director for approval where necessary, in a word the Sodality continued its zealous work under the direction of its own officers who were, in the words of the rule, really and truly "the faithful coadjutors" of the Director "in governing the Sodality."

A NOTABLE CASE IN POINT

Sometimes very striking instances have occurred in our experience of the necessity for this division of labor, for entrusting to the officers their due share of effort and responsibility. Once, being asked to organize a Sodality, we found the conditions apparently most favorable. There was an energetic

group of interested young people, an active and earnest priest to serve as director, a good field for Sodality work, in a word, everything seemed propitious. We gave a Sodality retreat, explained the work of the organization, emphasized, too, the need of training the officers and dividing the labor. Apparently there was good reason to hope that the Sodality would live long and flourish.

In fact, it did show great spirit and activity so long as that Director remained in charge. He undertook everything himself. He saw that everyone attended meeting. The works of the sections were under his immediate supervision. Strenuously and almost alone, he promoted everything. The officers looked on in admiration. Things were going so well and they had almost nothing to do. In fact, they scarcely seemed necessary at all. The Director in himself was a whole host of officers.

WHEN THE DIRECTOR DEPARTED

Suddenly, worn out perhaps by his strenuous labors, the Director departed from this life. His own great zeal had overtaxed his natural powers. His loss was indeed a great blow to the Sodality. His successor, who came to continue his ministry, found himself too occupied with other things to give much time to the Sodality. The officers and Sodalists, accustomed to look to the priest for everything, untrained in administration or initiative, remained for a little while stunned by their loss. They did not know what to do. Indeed it hardly occurred to them that the officers themselves could carry on Sodality activities when the priest merely approved and allowed, without himself supplying the energy and initiative. If they had been trained to carry on with only an occasional bit of encouragement or help from the Direc-

tor, they might have gone indefinitely forward. As it was, the Sodality simply collapsed. It was buried with its former Director. A short time afterward, being invited again to the locality, we found that there was hardly enough life left in the Sodality to make it worthy of the name.

THE REORGANIZATION AND ITS RESULTS

Several years afterward we were asked to reorganize this same Sodality. Profiting by experience, we represented to the Sodalists and the Director the absolute need of electing and training competent officers and giving them due responsibility. At the organization meetings and at a special meeting of the officers, this point was stressed—that the officers themselves and their Sodalists should carry the burden of the work. As a consequence, the best possible officers were selected, to the general satisfaction of all concerned. They entered upon their work with a sense of personal responsibility. When difficulties occur, the officers now try to meet the situation themselves, before seeking the Director's aid. As a consequence, they can usually solve Sodality problems, and their work is carried forward energetically whether the busy Director is present or not. The officers in such a plan of government are trained in initiative and judgment. The younger members, seeing the example of the officers, are encouraged to take part themselves in active work. If the Director is changed, the officers and Sodalists can supply the element of continuous life. How much better, in the long run, is the second method of government than the first!

In our country and time it is especially necessary to carry out this principle of the Sodality rules that the officers should be real helpers in the government of the Sodality. Our priests are, in general, over-

burdened with many cares. The harvest is great and the laborers comparatively are few. If the Sodality is to depend in everything on the Director, he must either be obliged to give up other and perhaps more necessary activities or else overtax his powers in trying to carry the whole burden of the Sodality.

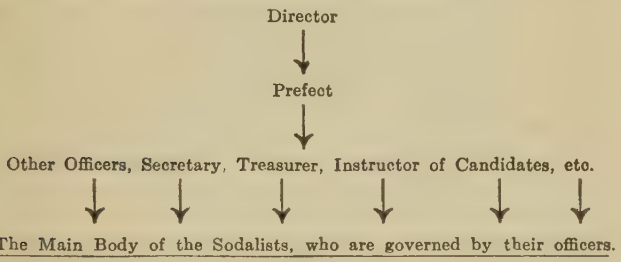
A FATAL WANT OF REALIZATION

It is a failure to realize this principle and act on it, which is responsible for the wretched condition of some Sodalities of the present time. They are organized out of devotion to the Blessed Virgin and to give their members those admirable helps to piety and active goodness which Sodalities are traditionally best suited to confer. But no one takes the trouble to make a careful study of the real nature of Sodalities. Hence the newly organized society is treated as a sort of devotional exercise, or else the priest in charge takes on himself the whole management of its activities. In either case the Sodality fails of its effect. What the Director had best do in the beginning, is to read himself and to give to his officers some of those books which have been recently prepared on Sodality organization, and then confer with them and discuss local conditions with them until the officers themselves understand what they are to do and what share of responsibility the Director intends them to assume.

THE DUE ORDER OF INFLUENCE

Then they can meet with him from time to time and thus keep under his direction and guidance while understanding that the direct work of the Sodality depends on them and is in their charge. Thus, the Director will exert his influence on the officers to make them active and fervent. The officers will direct

their zeal toward stirring up the members. In the sections the general officers of the Sodality will exercise themselves in keeping the president and other officials of the sections active and fervent, and these officers in turn will deal with the members of their section. We may perhaps express this more clearly by a diagram. In the following, the arrows indicate the lines of influence which, beginning with the Director, reach the body of the Sodalists through the zealous and well-trained officers of the Sodality.


Director
Prefect
Other Officers, Secretary, Treasurer, Instructor of Candidates, etc.
The Main Body of the Sodalists, who are governed by their officers.

This simple scheme illustrates how the influence of the Director and his instructions and suggestions, first communicated to the officers of the Sodality, travel downward and reach the whole body of the sodality in an orderly way. Of course, this does not mean that the Director will not deal immediately with the Sodalists whenever he thinks proper. But the general government should be carried on in the way we have indicated both to spare the Director unnecessary exertion and to give the officers and the Sodalists training in initiative and self-reliance.

THE COMPETENCE OF SODALISTS

If anyone objects that this plan is not practical, a moment's reflection should show its efficiency. Surely the members of our Sodalities are not below the

average in capacity. They can manage their own societies if they can manage their own families or even their own affairs. In many of our Sodalities are to be found young men and women who are holding important executive positions in businesses and who are trained for direction and organization even more than is the priest who has charge of the Sodality. The only reason why they do not assume more responsibility in their own Sodality is that they either are not interested enough to come forward or they think the Director does not wish them to do so. In either case they should be trained and instructed, interested and inspired, until they are willing, as they are able, to manage and conduct their own Sodality. If this training takes time and patience, it is well worth while giving these generously. We are tempted to repeat the homely old saying, "It is better, far, far better, to set ten men to work, than to do the work of ten men one's self." Too many Directors of Sodalities are trying in vain to do the work of ten and perishing in the effort.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS

"THEY should be very diligent in executing the duties of their office." (Rule 49.)

The elements of success in the direction of Sodalities are very simple. Hard work, attention to details, and perseverance will ensure a good Sodality; and without these, success, permanent and true success, is hardly to be hoped for. It is eminently true of Sodality work that what is worth doing is worth doing well, and it would be better to give up the name of Sodality and cease to pretend to be Sodalists than to drag along neglecting the work of the Sodality, disregarding the rules, and bringing discredit on the name of Sodalist by a listless slipshod way of conducting the meeting, an intermittent and spasmodic series of ill-prepared attempts at work, and a general shiftlessness in managing the Sodality affairs.

THE PART OF THE DIRECTOR AND OFFICERS

All those, then, on whom the success of the Sodality in any way depends should look to it that they are industrious in doing their part. The Director must guide and plan and suggest, be punctual at meetings, well prepared in his instructions, constant in the encouragement he gives to all Sodality works. By his enthusiasm, ardent love of the Blessed Mother, and willingness to work for her interests and those of the Sodality, he can inspire the whole body with enthusiasm and zeal.

The officers of the Sodality must work hard, each in his own department of activity, if the Sodality is to be a success. By reading carefully what is said in the rules concerning the duties of the officers in general and his own in particular, he can discover just what part he is to play in the spiritual and social endeavors of the Sodalists, and if he feels himself unwilling or unable to attend to the work assigned him, the honest thing is to resign rather than to injure the Sodality by turning what is meant to be a serious office and responsibility into a sinecure. If any one of the officers perceives that the duty assigned to his office is necessarily in abeyance for the time, he should seek some other charge from the Director or take up some work himself for the benefit of the Sodality, rather than be an officer only in name. As prayer for the works and interests of the Sodality is among the most important activities of all Sodalists, each of the officers should feel bound in honor to pray all the more earnestly for the success of its work because he is entrusted with a larger share of responsibility than are the other members.

THE MEMBERS' PART

Finally, the members themselves must be prepared to second the work of the Director and of the officers by working hard themselves for the welfare of the Sodality. In a society like this, the example of one has sometimes an altogether disproportionate influence on the conduct and zeal of the others, and each Sodalist should realize that by working hard himself he is not only accomplishing the little results of his own personal efforts, but that he is also encouraging all the other members to do their own level best to make the Sodality a success. So true is this that in nearly every Sodality one can pick out certain mem-

bers who, whether they are officers or not, are, as it were, the salt of the whole organization, and give it by their zeal and activity, their energy and self-sacrifice, its tone and savor.

The ideal Sodality would be one in which all the members are of this stamp, encouraging one another and supporting one another by mutual good example; and the more of such members a Sodality can develop, the nearer it approaches to the Sodality ideal.

Those Sodalists who are dragging along, doing as little as possible and always content to bring up the tail of the procession should stir themselves to greater activity and zeal with the reflection that they are harming by their laziness, not themselves alone, but the whole Sodality. They make it more difficult for the whole Sodality to reach the proper level of zeal and piety, because whenever there is any question of work to be done or enterprises to be attempted they must always be reckoned with, and the thought of their apathy and inertia tends to discourage the Director and officers and dishearten the more ambitious and zealous members. The Sodality is like a family where the presence of one drone in the family circle puts just that much more of a burden on the others and is a damper on the entire household.

THE GOSPEL OF HARD WORK

Hence, hard work on all hands is the first secret of Sodality success, whether in the interior piety which it is its first purpose to stir up in its members or in the active good works which are to be the manifestation of their interior devotion and a means to increase it. So that Directors and officers and members must make up their minds each to bear that part of the work which only he can do and which no one else can make up for him. If the enterprises of the world

find so many unselfish and devoted workers, is it not fair to expect that the children of our Blessed Lady and Queen will spend and sacrifice themselves in her honor? If it is thought worth while to work so hard for the things that perish, shall we not be willing to do much more for the kingdom of God?

CAREFULNESS IN DETAILS

The next requisite for success is a careful attention to detail, and this is of an importance that sometimes escapes even careful and zealous officers and Directors of Sodalities. The saying is singularly applicable and appropriate here, that details are little things and seem but trifles, but attention to these little things means perfection, and perfection is no trifle. In every organization it is the small details that, taken all together, spell success; and particularly is this true in the Sodality, where one cannot depend on mere good-fellowship nor on natural and selfish motives to secure the coöperation of the members, but where steady system and orderly method are necessary to keep the members up to the ideal and to help them to persevere against the contrary pull of the world, the flesh, and the devil, not to speak of many distractions and businesses.

PROGRAMS FOR MEETINGS AND CELEBRATIONS

Therefore, there must be in the Sodality a careful attention to detail in holding the meetings, so that they may be on time, interesting, devotional, and not tedious. The program should be definite and arranged beforehand; the routine may be pleasantly varied by introducing from time to time new prayers and a change of exercises. The minutes of the preceding meeting and the accounts of the activities of the Sodality should be well and succinctly written and

punctually read. The Sodality celebrations should be prepared and planned beforehand with as much solemnity and care as possible, and every detail of the ceremonies should be managed with skill and neatness. Moreover, this necessary attention to detail should not depend merely on one individual nor be left entirely to the Director or the prefect. Each officer of the Sodality should attend to the details of his own charge with loving care. Where many things are to be borne in mind and many details attended to, as happens in a well-organized Sodality, it is as unwise as it is unfair to put the whole burden of detail and management on any one person however willing.

Especially is it important that the work of the sections be carried on with great and loving attention to details. It is the duty of the president and secretary of each section, not to do all the work themselves, but to see that it is systematically divided among all the members. They should bear in mind the saying that it is better to set ten men to work than to do the work of ten men themselves, and their merit will consist largely in seeing that the detail work of the section is so carefully and thoroughly organized that everyone may take part with the minimum waste of time and energy and the maximum result for the special work of the section.

AN UNWAVERING PERSEVERANCE

Last of all, and most important perhaps of all the requisites for success, comes an indomitable and unbreakable perseverance. No matter what mistakes are made in the beginning, no matter what obstacles are to be encountered, everything will come right in the end, and success is assured if one has only perseverance in work and in prayer. On the other hand, circumstances may be never so favorable, the com-

mencement never so prosperous—without perseverance it all will come to nothing. The willingness to keep plodding on in the face of discouragement and seeming failure is absolutely essential in Director and in officers if the work of a Sodality is to endure. For, even after the best beginnings there comes a time when fervor seems to cool, obstacles arise, the zealous are tempted to grow weary, and perhaps active opposition develops to the work of the Sodality and it seems as though, humanly speaking, it would be better to give up the work and turn one's energies into some more profitable and interesting field. That is the time of discouragement that tries the soul. Then the test of true zeal and honest love of the Blessed Mother and of her work is to keep on trying, with humbleness and perseverance, relying more on the protection of the Queen of Heaven, which can neither fail nor be refused to those who trust in her, than on any personal effort, though every personal effort is generously made which can help to success.

CHAPTER XXXIV

ON MAKING ALLOWANCES

"LET them never presume to impose their own ideas, nor act through motives of self-love or personal advantage, but have regard solely to the greater glory of God and the spiritual good of the Sodality." (Rule 51.)

This very prudent admonition well may apply, not only to the officers, to whom it is directly addressed, but to everyone who has anything to do with the management of a Sodality. Those especially who have greater power or influence in Sodality affairs should imprint it the more deeply on their memories and earnestly make a firm resolution never to impose their own ideas nor act through motives of self-love or personal advantage, but to have regard in all solely to the greater glory of God and the spiritual good of the Sodality.

THE ART OF CONCILIATION

One of the most important accomplishments in the management of any society, or in the maintenance of any human enterprise whatsoever, is the exquisite art of making allowances for people who differ from us in opinion. It seems a dreadfully trite remark, that those who govern must make allowances for the wishes and opinions of others. So it is in theory, but in practice the forgetting of this obvious principle has wrecked many promising organizations, and, alas! many Sodalities among the number.

Of course, there will always be differences of opinion. In proportion as anyone is enthusiastic, interested, and energetic, he will have strong views and definite notions on any given subject which concerns the work. In proportion as he is eager for success and sure about the means which will lead to it, his character is liable to be tenacious, definite, and aggressive. No wonder, then, that when several of these energetic people are associated together, their opinions differ and clash. Each sees quite clearly that his or her own way of judging is right; and, strange to say, both the disputants may be quite justified in the persuasion. Two courses of action may both commend themselves, and for different but solid reasons. Especially in practical matters where there is sometimes no way of arriving at a certain conclusion, prudence may look two ways, and it may depend a great deal on one's predispositions or on the way in which the question is presented, which side one takes. It is quite natural in such instances, for the two parties to the dispute each to maintain his own viewpoint very strongly and to be entirely convinced that his own is the proper judgment and the prudent course.

AVOIDING SELF-LOVE

There is no wrong in all this, and no harm is done by the difference of opinion, unless the disputants insist each on his personal views without being willing to make any allowances for the attitude of the other and for the solid reasons which probably support his contention. But if each refuses to make any concessions at all and sturdily maintains his own viewpoint as the only tenable one, then there is sure to be trouble. Now the rule in question points out the precise source of danger in such a difference of opinion. It says: "Let them never presume to *im-*

pose their own ideas, nor act through motives of self-love." This refusal to make allowances for the views of others, this tenacious insistence upon one's own opinion to the exclusion of the judgment of others, does not ordinarily come from the strength of one's position nor from the disinterested conviction that one is right. It comes from a selfish wish to impose one's own ideas and from motives, whether realized or not, of self-love and self-esteem.

SEEING THE OTHER SIDE

Those who have to do with the affairs of a Sodality should therefore very determinedly resolve to see the other side of every controversy and try to arrive at an amicable solution as soon as possible, by the simple expedient of putting themselves in the other's place and trying to see all the good and reason there is in his side of the controversy, so as to be able to yield all that can be yielded and to arrive at a settlement and practical decision, not according to what they desire, but according, as the rule says, "to the greater glory of God and the spiritual good of the Sodality."

In managing the affairs of such a society as the Sodality, where the whole purpose of the body is religious, and where the work is not intended for any personal interest or satisfaction, but for the pure love of God, those who are in charge should be most anxious to defer to one another and to practice mutual forbearance. It should therefore be their constant effort to make allowances and to take the viewpoints of others with Christian courtesy, instead of insisting stubbornly on their own opinion.

NOT FOR ONE'S PERSONAL INTERESTS

The rule goes on to warn the officers, and by implication the members also, "not to presume to act

through motives of personal advantage." This would seem almost a superfluous admonition to give a Sodalist, who enters the Sodality not for any temporal end whatever, but for spiritual merit and progress and in honor of the Blessed Mother; and yet human nature is so weak and ambition and self-love sometimes so strong that one actually finds misguided individuals in Sodalities maneuvering for place and position and trying to get offices, not so much for the good work they can do as for their own personal interest. This is a harmful anomaly in a Sodality. It is bad enough in any organization, even secular, for ambitious individuals to prefer their own personal interest to the welfare of the organization, but it is a great deal worse evil in the Sodality, whose aim is spiritual and whose purpose is to serve God unselfishly and devotedly.

Those, therefore, who are deliberately selfish and ambitious, or who are trying to promote any other interest than that of the Blessed Mother and her children, should take to heart the stern admonition of the rule, and purge themselves of this selfishness.

THE BANE OF CLIQUES AND CIRCLES

But there is another way, not so uncommon, in which selfishness and personal ambition will work havoc in Sodalities. It is through the formation of cliques or circles, the members of which cleave together and pursue their own private ends to the exclusion of, and sometimes with great harm to, the other Sodalists and the whole Sodality. These cliques do immeasurable hurt. They try, of course, to impose their own ideas and work for their own ends, but this is not the greatest evil. Animosities, hard feelings, jealousies, bickerings, and contentions arise in the Sodality which make it exceedingly difficult to get on with

work at all, and the formation of one clique leads to the banding together of another, until the Sodality, which should be a model of Christian equality and charity, becomes a small edition of a civil war, with battles, skirmishes, and single combats, fusses and heart-burnings on every occasion. This may be only the preliminary to the breaking-up of the Sodality altogether. Who are responsible? Those, no doubt, who began the formation of cliques and thus thoughtlessly brought discord into the Sodality.

FOOLISH CLASS DISTINCTION

Similarly, the spirit of caste and class distinction is another fruit of self-love and an odious thing in Sodalists. The comical social distinctions which people make between themselves and others are bad enough in the parish, where they incline to disrupt the congregation, but in the Sodality they are intolerable. To join the Sodality means to put oneself on a spiritual level with the rest of the Sodalists, and as to any other ground of distinction, it should not be admitted. Those who consider that they have some advantage over the rest of the Sodalists in point of social distinction should show their superior breeding by their absolute attention to all the obligations of a Sodalist, and, whatever company they keep outside of Sodality meetings, they should at least keep entirely free from class feelings and class distinction while engaged in Sodality work.

The spirit of making allowances for others and of entering into their feelings will make for this equality. Those who consider they have some advantage in point of education or place or training should consider that others who are not so fortunate are perhaps just as deserving as they and also quite as sensitive. By entering into the feelings and sentiments of others

they will find it easy to refrain from any snobbishness or pretensions while at the Sodality meetings.

SIGNS OF LACK OF SPIRIT

Applying these general observations to particular cases, one may see how ridiculous is the attitude of the domineering or self-assertive member, officer, or, for that matter, Director of the Sodality. In a purely religious society the true eminence and superiority is that of eminence in charity, humility, and gentleness. Any Sodalist, therefore, who stands out inconsiderately for his own view and wishes to domineer incurs, not honor, but disgrace. The Sodalist who quits the Sodality in disgust at the failure of his opinion to prevail in some matter of Sodality policy or action, convicts himself of a lack of proper spirit. So does the officer who insists on his own way of doing things without consideration for the ways of others. So do the younger members who criticise unjustly and take a captious and dissatisfied attitude. So does the Director who domineers or the prefect who disregards the opinions of the consultors.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE SODALITY HISTORY

"IT IS the duty of the Secretary to write up the minutes of the Council meetings, to keep the general journal of the Sodality . . . The minutes of the Council, the general journal of the Sodality, and the enrollment of the Sodalists should be in three distinct books, which should not be lacking in any Sodality." (Rule 55.)

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SECRETARY'S OFFICE

It does not do for the officers of a Sodality to take their duties too lightly and to look on their position and title as honorary. There are no purely honorary offices in the Sodality, since it was not established to give honor on earth to men and women, but to God and His Blessed Mother in heaven. Hence, with each office goes some responsibility, and those who are appointed or elected should assume the duties with the title, and try to carry out the share of Sodality work which their office gives them. This is particularly true of the secretary, to whom it falls to keep the Sodality history, in the minutes of the Council and the general journal of the Sodality, and to preserve for after days the interesting and edifying events which come into the work and prayer of every well-regulated and properly active Sodality.

It has been said: "Blessed is the nation that has no history"; and recent events lend point to the say-

ing. But the very opposite is true of the Sodality. For while a nation's history, so far as men have thought it worth while to preserve it, is likely in large measure to be made up of vicissitudes and evil, with wars and plagues as its leading incidents, the history of a Sodality is a story of devotion, helpfulness, and zeal, which gives encouragement to present members and preserves edifying memories for those who are still to come. Hence, "Blessed is that Sodality which *has* a history."

THE VALUE OF THE SODALITY HISTORY

Now, to preserve the history of the Sodality in interesting, readable form, for the information and encouragement of present members and for the edification of those to come, is the special duty of the recording secretary. If one is interested in one's self, and has the faculty of picking out the things that are of permanent interest to others, it is possible to make a very readable story out of the happenings of any Sodality. The little and seemingly insignificant events that now appear almost trivial will have acquired an altogether new value and importance when years have passed and these items of Sodality experience and effort are salvaged from the past and authentic memorials of things and people that have changed or passed away.

THE ARCHIVES OF THE PRIMA PRIMARIA

There exist in Rome the archives of the *Prima Primaria,* the mother and head Sodality, which communicates its privileges and indulgences to many thousands of our Sodalities in the United States. One finds in this history an astonishing wealth of particulars concerning even the most individual details of the Sodality's activities—the events of special

meetings, the arrangements of the altar, the feasts and devotions of the Sodalists. All this variety of detail, now in many cases full of interesting and welcome information, we owe to the faithfulness and diligence of the successive secretaries of the Sodality, who persevered through the long course of years in observing the rule of their office and set down the details which must to them have seemed so insignificant, but which are now interesting and valuable out of all proportion to their former importance, because they have become history and come down from such a distant and honorable past.

Had they realized what they were doing, and known that in times to come historians of the Sodality would pore over their simple records and set them in print for after generations to read, their merit in observing the rule might have been less, because the human inducement might have formed their leading motive of fidelity. But, no doubt, they were so faithful solely out of a sense of the duty of their office, and to honor the Blessed Mother by their work. Doubtless they are the more pleasing in the eyes of their fellow Sodalists in heaven, as they were more estimable on earth because of their faithfulness to the office imposed on them of keeping the history of the Sodality.

OTHER NOTABLE SODALITY RECORDS

Not a few other noted Sodalities of the present time can point rather proudly to well-kept annals of their past achievements in honor of Our Lady and Queen. The history of the Sodality has yet to be written. The labors of those who are systematizing and making available the histories of particular Sodalities prepare the way for a complete account, so far as it can still be prepared, of the Sodality's three hundred and fifty

years of glorious achievement. Some of the chapters of that history will be of thrilling interest, such as the history of those great Sodalities of the eighteenth century, which, as Father Henri Fouqueray has shown in his pamphlet *An Eighteenth Century Social Work,* conducted almost every one of the social philanthropies that are thought most modern and are boasted of as the inventions of this more enlightened time; or the records of those Sodalities in Mexico and South America, which had glorious achievements to their credit long before their northern neighbors had begun to emerge from the rude life of pioneers.

But in that long story of the achievements of the Sodalists in honor of their Queen, some chapters will be blank, and those not, perhaps, the least interesting nor the least important. The work was done by the Sodalists. They experienced, as well as the other Sodalities, the special protection of the Blessed Virgin, and they originated activities and held religious celebrations in her honor. But their secretaries were slothful or negligent, or perhaps they had never realized the meaning of their duties, and so they kept no record of the Sodality history. There is a blank page where their record should have been found, and the edification which might have come to other generations from reading their accounts of the work of their Sodalities is lost forever.

THE WAY OF WRITING THE SODALITY HISTORY

It is high time, then, for the secretaries of the Sodalities to stir themselves up to a greater interest in keeping carefully and in an interesting way the Sodality history. This is done in many places by keeping minutes of every meeting and reading them at the succeeding meeting, for change, if necessary, and for approval. But it is not enough merely to

give the dry outlines of the meeting itself. To be truly the history of the Sodality, the records should be full enough in detail and complete enough in scope to give one a fairly complete idea of the work and doings of the Sodality. In fact, it would seem to be better to give up the dry and formal style of minutes and to make the history a running chronicle of events and achievements, using a brief, concise way of writing, giving the gist of what has happened, and trying to get all the essential details in as brief a space as possible. This will be a very good exercise for the secretary himself in pithiness of style and brevity of statement, and it will make it possible to get a great deal of information in a brief compass, so that the records will not grow out of bounds.

The rules suggest that three distinct books be kept, one containing the minutes of Council meetings, the second the journal of the Sodality itself, and the third the enrollment of the Sodalists. Each of these records gives, in its own way, a page from the Sodality history. The minutes of the Council should be a faithful record of the deliberations of these meetings of the major officers of the Sodality, who are called together from time to time, as is stated in the eighteenth rule, "to assist the Father Director in the government and conduct of the Sodality." In the journal of the Sodality, which is the second record ordered to be kept by the secretary, is to be found the current history of the Sodality itself. In this book the secretary should keep the history of the Sodality properly so called, the summary of reports of Sodality work, the celebrations of feasts of the Blessed Virgin, the social gatherings, and such items of personal interest concerning individual Sodalists as are thought edifying and interesting enough to preserve for times to come. It is in the selection and recording of these

items and of the events in the work and prayer of the Sodality that the secretary will show the most skill, and the one who has the office should consult not so much personal preferences and leanings in the keeping of this journal as what is for general edification and for the information of coming years.

Those secretaries who have not been living up to the requirements of the rules in this matter of keeping records should not delay to secure the necessary books and begin. Their fidelity as historians will encourage the works of the Sodality, give more enthusiasm to the members when they hear each week the chronicles of events and achievements, and gain for the secretaries themselves the merit of fidelity and perseverance in their allotted work in honor of the Queen.

CHAPTER XXXVI

INTERCOMMUNICATION OF SODALITIES

"COMMENDABLE also is the practice both of publishing and of reading Sodality periodicals which treat of Sodality matters and foster the Sodality spirit in their readers." (Rule 67.)

The article from which this rule is taken is headed: "Intercommunication of Sodalities," and it urges the adoption by the Sodalists of several very effective means for keeping in touch with the activities of other Sodalities in honor of the Blessed Mother of God. The first rule in this section recommends the holding of congresses of Sodality Directors and of Sodalists; the second is this one recommending that Sodality magazines be published and *read* by the Sodalists; the third urges the formation of Sodality unions wherever this can be done.

THE NEED OF INTERCOMMUNICATION

These methods of communication have been and are being ardently promoted with increasing success. It is plain how important they are, not only for the general edification and for the greater glory of God and of His Blessed Mother, but also for the internal prosperity and fervor of the Sodalities themselves. The Sodalities of the Blessed Virgin are not to be isolated little groups, in separate parishes, keeping to themselves and becoming more and more narrow in

their interests and limited in their sympathies and work until they cease to be able to hold the allegiance of active and zealous people and die of inanition. Quite the contrary, each Sodality is part of a great and world-wide organization whose extent is bounded only by the earth and whose activities are as wide and as various as Christian charity.

In becoming a member of the Sodality, one joins a great family of the Blessed Virgin, seven million strong, grouped, it is true, into some forty thousand different Sodalities, but all owning a bond of close affiliation and all working together shoulder to shoulder with the same holy ideals, the same rules and traditions, the inspiration of a great and common devotion to the holy Mother of God and of a common love of one another.

THE EXCHANGE OF SUGGESTIONS AND ENCOURAGEMENT

It is an immense advantage, then, from every standpoint that our Sodalities should communicate with one another as much as possible. The more they learn of one another's numbers and progress, the more they will feel encouraged to persevere in their own efforts. The more they are made to realize the immense extent of Sodality membership and activities, the more they will take pride in being themselves worthy members of such a mighty and holy organization. The suggestions they receive from the work of others may be adapted to their own circumstances. The solid encouragement of feeling that one's work is part of an immense and constant campaign being waged throughout the world in honor of the Blessed Mother, gives the lonely worker in this or that small society invaluable stimulus and encouragement to persevere.

The soldier in the trenches, hemmed in with mud and mist, keeping the lonely night watch while his

tired fellows sleep, with his tense nerves on stretch to catch the first sign of activity from the trenches of the enemy, and feeling the stillness and loneliness of the black treacherous night all around him, is likely to give way to gloominess and to discouragement. He is a solitary little atom, an aching, a weary and downhearted atom, whirled by the resistless storm of war into this forefront of danger and misery, keeping watch over an insignificant little space of muddy trench and impotent to do anything effective in the maelstrom of men, the greatest and widest of all wars. Then, in the mist of his downhearted musings, he hears the noise of a distant attack and defense, where others like him, wearing the same uniform and sworn to the same allegiance, are stiffening to repel an onslaught on their trenches. Their shouts come faintly to his ears, the crackling of their machine guns makes sharp music. He grows still more tense, and listens and smiles to himself in the darkness as the firing dies and the night grows silent again. They have beaten them back! The boys were on their guard and ready. Now that solitary man minds no longer the suspense, the strain and loneliness of the watch, for he is no longer an isolated and powerless unit, a dejected individual, but he is part of a great army, wakeful and strong, which flings its vigilant line across hundreds of miles of country and lies on guard to shield his native land. The power of a hundred regiments is behind him. He feels the watchfulness of ten thousand other sentinels at his shoulder. He is no longer an individual, but part of a great army; and the soul of the army is strengthening his soul.

A VAST SPIRITUAL ARMY

It is so, too, with the spiritual army which we call the Sodality. Its forces lie at watch on every fron-

tier of God's world-wide kingdom. Its sentinels are on guard wherever the interests of Mary's Son are to be furthered, wherever brave men and women are fighting the battles of God. The militia of Mary, as the Popes have called the Sodalists, are waging a thousand glorious battles under the banner of the Immaculate. At the far frontiers of the foreign missions, pale priests, weary Sisters, untiring catechists, toil undiscouraged for the conversion of the darkened millions, and their zeal springs afresh at the thought of Mary, Queen of Apostles, and the prayers of seven million of their fellow Sodalists gain them grace.

In uncounted parishes in every land young and old, the boys and girls, the men and the women, are banded together to honor and serve their gentle Mother, and their devotion bears the fruit of numberless acts of zeal. In schools, in colleges, the quiet, inestimable influence of the Sodality, the instruction of zealous Directors, the good example of associates, and the training of organized good works is moulding the characters of dear and generous girls and boys in the Sodality to make of them heroic priests, devoted Sisters, exemplary mothers and fathers—the salt of the earth and light of the world and the treasures of the Church in the coming generation.

FOR SPECIAL CLASSES

Then there are the special Sodalities: of priests, where all the members are pastors of souls, who, not content with leading others onward in the service of their Queen and Mother, gather themselves in priestly conference to speak of the affairs of the Sodality and refresh their own devotion that they may kindle others the more readily. There are Sodalities of lawyers and physicians, intent on making their service to mankind a reasonable and holy service through the inter-

cession of Mary; Sodalities of nurses and of teachers, who gather together to sanctify their work for the bodies and the minds of men, so that it may also profit their souls, and find their best model and their most powerful patroness in the Blessed Mother, who nursed and brought up the Son of God; Sodalities of students and of seminarists, whose learning is sanctified by being consecrated to the honor of her who is the Seat of Wisdom; Sodalities for every sort and description of the faithful, of workingmen, nobles, peasants, soldiers, shop-girls, officers of the army and the navy, mothers of families, court officials, parish-school children, clerks, penitents, chimney sweeps; in a word, of every imaginable class of the Catholic people.

LAMENTABLE IGNORANCE AND ISOLATION

But of all the edification, the inspiration and encouragement which should come from this vast army of the Queen, fighting on so many fronts and with such devoted valor, how much can reach the solitary Sodalists if they are pent in their own parish, confined to the small circle of their own work, and without communication with the world-wide Sodality to which they belong? Far from being edified and encouraged by the achievements of other Sodalities, they do not even know that other Sodalities exist; and to such a lamentable extent is this sometimes true, that Sodalists cannot tell whether there is a Sodality in the neighboring parish, or even where there is another Sodality in the entire city in which they live.

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

It is immensely important, then, that each Sodality should do its part in carrying out the injunction of the rules concerning the intercommunication of Sodalities—not only because it is the rule, but also be-

cause it is a necessity for the full success of the Sodalities themselves. What are the means of intercommunication at hand? No one will quarrel with us if we mention first the Sodality magazine. *The Queen's Work* was established for this, among other things: to promote an exchange of ideas and good influence among the American Sodalities. Yet, it can only achieve this purpose through the coöperation of the officers of the Sodalities themselves. The officers, and particularly the secretaries, must write and report the doings of their Sodalities, and the Sodality department exists for this purpose, and is always hospitably open to them. There are a number of our Sodalities which have never been represented in any way in this department, and the fault is that of their officers. Another way in which the Sodalities may communicate is by correspondence between their secretaries. Still another way is by holding joint meetings and having a short social session afterward in a near-by hall, when the reports of the Sodality as read at the meeting will give the visiting Sodality interesting suggestions and information.

SODALITY UNIONS

Finally, a most general and fruitful intercommunication between Sodalities will come from the thorough organization of Sodality unions and the publication of their transactions in the Sodality magazine. These unions are a thing of yesterday, and yet the achievements of some of them are already worthy of comparison with those organizations of much longer standing. They bring to the spirit of supernatural zeal and self-sacrifice the help of organization and make possible a coöperation and sociability among the Sodalities which can be achieved in no other way. Considering the many advantages that come

from union and coöperation, it is strange that so many of the Sodality officers are so slow in taking up their part in promoting the intercommunication of Sodalities. A little energy and self-sacrifice here, the willingness to bestir oneself, to send in reports to *The Queen's Work,* and to correspond with other Sodalities, would bring in fruits out of all measure greater than the comparatively slight exertion involved. Let our Sodalist officers bestir themselves, and let us all work together to promote the intercommunication of Sodalities for their good and the honor of our Queen!

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE SODALITY INDULGENCES

THERE is usually published after the edition of the Common Rules of 1910 a summary of the indulgences and privileges which successive Popes have granted to the Head Sodality erected in the Roman College of the Society of Jesus and to other Sodalities that have been or shall be aggregated to it. These indulgences are very rich and numerous and they are a powerful motive in inducing the faithful to become and remain members of affiliated Sodalities.

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR GAINING THE INDULGENCES

The requirements for gaining these indulgences are: first, that one shall be a duly received member of a Sodality which is validly affiliated to the Head Sodality at Rome; and, second, that one shall perform the work to which the indulgence in question has been attached with at least a general intention of gaining it. Both these requirements stand to reason. Yet, it is well to dwell a moment on each since some strange omissions occur at times which invalidate the Sodality indulgences.

ERECTION AND AFFILIATION REQUIRED

First, then, for the obtaining of the indulgences the Sodality must be duly erected and affiliated. The erection is performed, as we have explained else-

where, by the Ordinary of the place for non-Jesuit Sodalities and by the General of the Society of Jesus for Sodalities in Jesuit houses and institutions. In applying for the erection of a Sodality it is essential to state the place where the Sodality is to exist, the diocese, the class of persons composing the Sodality, and the primary title; that is, the title or feast of the Blessed Virgin chosen. It is also prudent to specify in the application for erection that the Bishop shall name the pastor or chaplain of the parish or institution and his successors to be Directors of the Sodality, with the power to subdelegate. This prevents any uncertainty in the future as to who is the Director empowered to receive candidates. After the approval of the Bishop has been obtained, by which the Sodality is erected and comes into being, then the document containing this approval should be sent to the nearest Jesuit Provincial, or to *The Queen's Work* for the Missouri Province, with the request that affiliation be obtained from Rome. When all these formalities have been complied with, the Sodality in question participates in the indulgences and privileges of the Head Sodality at Rome.

REQUISITES FOR DUE ADMISSION

The member, to receive the indulgences, must be duly admitted into the Sodality. For this all that is required is that the applicant should express a wish to be received and that the lawfully-appointed Director of the Sodality should manifest his intention to receive the candidate. Absolutely speaking, if anyone of the Sodality were to say to the Director, "Will you please admit me as a Sodalist," and the Director should reply, "I hereby admit you," this would be enough to constitute a valid admission and to give a right to the indulgences and privileges. But note that

these things are absolutely required: a valid erection, the valid affiliation of the Sodality, and the valid appointment of the Director who must validly admit the member.

AN ERROR ABOUT MEETINGS

For the gaining of any particular indulgence in question, all that is required is the performance of the act to which the indulgence is attached, with, of course, at least a general intention of gaining the indulgences. Thus there is a persistent error in the minds of some that if one fails to attend the meetings of the Sodality he can not gain any of the indulgences or that the Sodality which has not regular weekly meetings forfeits its right to the privileges and indulgences. The fact is, that by omitting a meeting one loses the right only to the indulgences for that meeting. The duly admitted member of the Sodality has a right, for the rest, to the indulgences for any action duly performed. With so much of an explanation, let us briefly review some of the more important of the Sodality indulgences. It has been calculated that the Sodalist can gain at least a hundred extra plenary indulgences each year by reason of Sodality membership, while the partial indulgences one can gain as a Sodalist during that time are almost without number.

PLENARY INDULGENCES FOR SODALISTS ONLY

In the summary of indulgences distinction is made between the plenary and partial indulgences granted only to Sodalists, and the plenary indulgences which all the faithful can gain in the place where the Sodality is erected. The former are by far more numerous. Thus, on the day of his reception into the Sodality, if he receives holy communion on that day, the Sodalist may gain a plenary indulgence and this

has been granted by no less than five different Popes. So also on the feasts of Christmas, Ascension Day, the Immaculate Conception, Our Lady's Birthday, the Annunciation, the Purification, and the Assumption, they may gain a plenary indulgence on the usual conditions. So, too, on All Souls' Day the Sodalist can gain a plenary indulgence applicable to the souls in purgatory.

At each general communion of the Sodality, they can likewise gain a plenary indulgence, and within the week in which they have attended a Sodality meeting they can gain a plenary indulgence on any day they choose providing they receive communion on that day. At the hour of death they may obtain a plenary indulgence if, after confession and holy communion, or at least with contrition, they invoke devoutly the most holy name of Jesus in their heart, if they cannot with their lips. So, too, on making the spiritual exercises, or even a monthly recollection of one day, they may gain a plenary indulgence on the usual conditions. Finally, the Director of the Sodality, when he visits a sick Sodalist, "aids him with spiritual advice to bear patiently the discomforts of sickness, or to accept death willingly from the hands of Our Lord, and has him recite before an image of Our Saviour crucified, three Our Fathers and three Hail Marys for the intentions of the Sovereign Pontiff, can impart to him a plenary indulgence on the day on which the sick Sodalist receives holy communion."

Sodalists can also gain all the indulgences of the stations at Rome "if, on the station day, they devoutly visit their Oratory, or some public church, and there say seven Our Fathers and seven Hail Marys and in the case of plenary indulgences, go to confession and holy communion." Another interesting indulgence conceded to the Sodalists is that "if for forty

days after spiritual exercises, they piously offer prayers for perseverance, they can gain an indulgence of 200 days for each day, and if they go to confession and holy communion, within the forty days, a plenary indulgence."

PARTIAL INDULGENCES

The partial indulgences granted only to Sodalists are also very interesting. Thus, they can gain an indulgence of seven years and seven quarantines every time they devoutly hear Mass on days not of obligation, or carefully examine their conscience in the evening before going to bed, or are present at public or private meetings of the Sodality, or at the Divine Office recited for the souls of departed Sodalists or other Catholics, conducted by the Sodality and approved by its Director. They may gain the same indulgence of seven years and seven quarantines every time they visit the poor or the sick or the imprisoned, every time they reconcile enemies, or pray for the sick or the departed, or accompany to ecclesiastical burial the bodies of Sodalists or others of the faithful.

The Sodalists may also gain the special indulgence of 300 days every time they devoutly recite the act of consecration of St. John Berchmans or of St. Francis de Sales or the anthem Hail, Holy Queen. They may also gain a 100-days' indulgence "every time they kiss the medal of Our Lady, which is the usual mark of distinction of the Sodalist, and devoutly say the prayer:

"Mary, with her loving Son, bless us each and every one!"

For this the medal must have the approval of the Ordinary, and be blessed by the Director of the Sodality or his delegate.

PLENARY INDULGENCES FOR ALL THE FAITHFUL

Besides these indulgences, granted only to Sodalists, there are other plenary indulgences as we have mentioned, which all the faithful can gain in the place where the Sodality is erected. Thus, the existence of a Sodality in a parish or institution confers a benefit of indulgences not only on its members but on all Catholics who visit the place. The first of these is that "if after confession and holy communion, they devoutly visit such a place between first Vespers and sunset, on the primary or secondary titular feast of the Sodality, and there pray for the intention of the Sovereign Pontiff," and this visit may now be made any time between the noon before the feast and the midnight of the feast itself. Moreover, in the event that the Sodality has no secondary title, the Director may choose one other day each year for this purpose, but with the consent of the Ordinary, or, if the Director be a regular priest, of his own superior.

If the meeting place of the Sodality varies or is changed either permanently or temporarily, or even if, for the greater convenience of the people and for more solemnity, the primary or secondary titular feast, as the case may be, is celebrated in another church with the Director's consent, the same indulgence avails for a visit to that other church. The Director may also, with the consent of the Ordinary, or of his own superior if he is a regular priest, designate another day in the year for the celebration of a feast and the gaining of an indulgence, in case either or both of the titular feasts cannot be celebrated with sufficient convenience or solemnity on its own day.

Likewise, all who are present on three successive days at the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament held in the place where the Sodality is erected, and pray

there and perform the other works enjoined, can gain the indulgences granted for the Forty Hours' devotion.

THE SODALITY PRIVILEGES

As to the privileges of the Sodality, they also are numerous and interesting. One of these is that the Director of the Sodality may substitute another priest for himself to receive members and bless the medals. Another is that the individual Sodalist can transfer the communion required for gaining a Sodality indulgence to any day within the octave of the one assigned. The indulgences connected with weekly meetings avail even if the meetings take place only twice a month, and the prayers recited by the Sodalists in common at the weekly meetings, with the will of directing them to the intentions of the Sovereign Pontiff, are sufficient for gaining the indulgences granted for those meetings.

When any priest in any place says Mass for a departed Sodalist, he has the benefits of a privileged altar. All the indulgences that have been or shall be granted to Sodalists, except of course the plenary indulgence to be gained at the hour of death, may be applied by them to the souls of the faithful departed. Anyone who is employed as a servant of a Sodality can gain all the indulgences granted a Sodalist, and the priest who is a legitimate Director of a Sodality participates of his own right in all the Sodality indulgences and privileges.

"ONCE A SODALIST, ALWAYS A SODALIST"

Another privilege is that "a Sodalist rightly admitted into a Sodality remains always a member of it unless he abandons it of his own accord or is dismissed as unworthy. Hence, by fulfilling the con-

ditions required, he always participates in the indulgences." But attention should be paid to the following paragraph: namely, that "a sodalist who is absent for a year or more from the place of a Sodality and settles in another place, from which he cannot attend the meeting, is, to gain the indulgences, obliged to enter a Sodality suitable to his circumstances in the place of his new residence unless the Director of this Sodality refuses him admittance or there is some other legitimate impediment, as to which the Director of the other Sodality shall be the judge."

Finally, "the Director of a Sodality erected primarily for youth, may admit into it grown men and fathers of families. The same holds in similar cases for other Sodalities even of women. A good reason, however, is requisite. This will more easily exist, if on changing a state of life—for example by marriage—one wishes to continue in the Sodality and there is no other Sodality of Our Lady suitable to him in that place."

Such, in brief, are the privileges and indulgences granted to Sodalists by the Holy See. No doubt, as the years wear on, still other spiritual favors will be imparted to them. Thus it is a no little benefit and spiritual favor to become and remain a faithful member of Our Lady's Sodality.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE PARTICIPATION OF OUTSIDERS

THE LIMITS OF MEMBERSHIP

MEMBERSHIP in the Sodality is, of course, limited to those who are able and willing to be worthy members thereof; that is, who will obey the spirit of the rules of the Sodality, will try to carry out its good traditions and will be active in its works and enterprises. "The Sodality," says the rule, "seeks to make the faithful . . . good Catholics, sincerely bent on sanctifying themselves each in his state of life and zealous, as far as their condition in life permits, to save and sanctify their neighbor and to defend the Church of Jesus Christ against the attacks of the wicked." This passage in the rule is, in a way, an epitome of the spirit and purpose of the Sodality. Through devotion to the Blessed Virgin the Sodality seeks to inspire its members with that precise sort of interior Catholic fervor which will of its own efficacy overflow in good works. Hence, anyone who enters the Sodality ought to be willing and able to carry out this definite program. He should be of such a character and good will that he will be able, through his devotion to the Blessed Virgin, to show himself an especially good Catholic, sincerely bent on his own personal sanctification and honestly willing to help save and sanctify his neighbor and to defend the Church of Christ.

But the difficulty not seldom arises that those who

are willing to make the special efforts required by Sodality membership or to affiliate themselves to a religious society are in the minority. Thus the situation sometimes occurs that in the parish or city there are found other men and women, desirous of participating in this or that activity of the Sodality, but who for one reason or another are unwilling or unable to join the Sodality itself or whom, for one cause or another, the Sodality does not wish to take as members. In such a case what is to be done? Is membership in the Sodality required for participation in all its activities? Or is it allowable for those who are not members of the Sodality to become members of a particular section and thus to coöperate in the specific work allotted to that special section.

NON-SODALISTS AS SECTION MEMBERS

The proper answer seems to be that it is allowable even for one who is not a Sodalist to be admitted to participation in the work of any section of the Sodality except where special circumstances forbid. In such a case the section member who is not a Sodalist would, of course, not enjoy the advantages of Sodality membership as such. He would not partake in the indulgences and privileges of a Sodalist nor participate in the prayers and good works offered up for Sodalists throughout the world. Neither, on the other hand, would he be obliged to attend Sodality meetings and communions. He would form part of that section to whose activities he had particularly allied himself.

This is the case, because though the sections are committees of the Sodality, yet each one has its own individuality and its particular activity. In the words of the rule, each has "an organization and life of its own, though always subject to the governing authority of the Sodality." The non-Sodalist member

of a section can, therefore, participate in the specific life of the section without being a member of the Sodality as a whole. Even in this case it would seem proper that the officers of the section should be Sodalists. There are several reasons for this, one being that the section is, after all, a committee of the Sodality, and as such should be governed by Sodalists. Another good reason why the officers should be Sodalists is that the policy and activities of the section might depart from the Sodality traditions. Hence, when non-Sodalist members are welcomed to sectional membership, they can hardly expect to become officers of the section, except by way of joining the Sodality.

AS MEMBERS OF ACADEMIES

The same observations would seem to apply to the activities of Sodality academies. "It is quite in accordance," says Rule 14, "with the original plan of Sodalities of Our Lady, to have in them, especially if they are Sodalities of students, one or more academies for the young to practice themselves in scientific, literary, artistic or economic exercises, to help them on in their studies or profession and to secure for them under the direction of competent persons, correct views on questions connected with Catholic faith and morals."

These academies, while primarily for the benefit of the Sodalist, may be also very helpful to other students, who for one reason or another are not disposed to or eligible for the Sodality. In such a case there seems to be no good reason why they may not be admitted to the academy and partake in its activities even though they are not Sodalists. Still, as in the case of the sections, the general activities of the academy should be subject to Sodality control, and hence the officers should be Sodalists.

A SOLUTION OF DIFFICULTIES

This latitude of Sodality organization will be found to solve many difficulties of a practical kind which otherwise might arise from the fact that not everyone is able or willing to enter the Sodality as such, who would like to participate in some of its activities. Thus, to take a quite ordinary instance, it may happen that in a school or city the Sodalists take the lead, as they should, in promoting the crusade for frequent communion and in spreading the "Knights and Ladies of the Blessed Sacrament." In such a case the Sodality organizes a section of Knights and Ladies of the Blessed Sacrament, composed primarily of Sodalists. This Crusade is a personal devotion and not an organization, since it consists chiefly in the resolution made by each one who joins it to pay personal homage to the Blessed Sacrament of a special kind by frequent communion, visits, attendance at Benediction and the Holy Hour, etc., and to induce others to pledge the same homage. But, though the Crusade should be promoted by a Sodality section, it is clear that membership in the Sodality is by no means a requisite to be a crusader. Anyone with good will can be admitted to the Frequent Communion Section and may take part in its activities. The only requisite is that to be an officer thereof one must be a Sodalist.

Another instance of the same kind is to be found in the schools where the Sodality establishes academies such as we have suggested in *Social Organization in Parishes,* for the study of Christian art, architecture, history, apologetics, sociology, etc.

It is not to be expected that all the students in the school will qualify as Sodalists, yet not a few of those who do not join the Sodality may wish to come in

and partake in the activities of the academies. They may do so; why not? Always safeguarding the interest of the Sodality, it is well at the same time, it is always well, to act on the principle of securing the greatest good to the greatest number. The additional members will tend to help the work of the academy while at the same time its influence will be extended to so much a larger circle of members.

NON-CATHOLICS AS PARTICIPANTS

The question may also arise whether non-Catholics likewise may be admitted to the sections and academies. Surely, they may participate in their activities and enjoy their benefits. The most ordinary zeal would encourage such procedure. Providing that no harm is done to the section or academy itself or no considerable impediment is put in the way of its work by the participation of non-Catholics, why should they not be allowed any benefit they can get from their presence?

But of course no real membership of any kind even in the sections or academies separately considered is possible for them since the Sodality and its sections are both Catholic organizations and all their members must be Catholics. Still, mere participation is all that the non-Catholic would commonly wish or think of asking for. Hence no practical difficulty arises from the fact that non-Catholics cannot be members.

This situation arises very often in the case of Sodalities for nurses in Catholic hospitals. A good many of our training schools have a considerable proportion of non-Catholic students. When the Sodality is organized, these quite often inquire whether they may not participate in the interesting activities suggested.

If they are refused, they naturally feel hurt at being excluded. But if they are assured of a welcome to the meetings, are told that they can participate as much as they like in the beneficent activities of the Sodality, and are even encouraged to come to devotional and social exercises, they are quite satisfied.

TO UNIFY PARISH ACTIVITIES

The same principle will make the Sodality very much more effective as a means for unifying and coordinating parish and school activities. We have often suggested in previous writings that the overlapping and duplication of effort too often to be observed in Catholic activities, and the multiplication of societies and consequent division of effort which is a present tendency, may be in some way cured by making the Sodality the central organization of the parish. Then the Sodalists, trained in this effective school of the lay-apostolate, can supply officers and workers to any activity needed.

Where there is a reason for a separate society to accomplish some specific work, as for example in the case of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, the Sodalists may serve as officers. Indeed the historic origin of the St. Vincent de Paul Society was from a Sodality of young men. On the other hand, where no reason exists for a separate society, the work in question may be undertaken through a section of the Sodality. In such a case, the officers will come from the ranks of the Sodalists, but the membership may be general, and non-Sodalists may be welcomed to participate in the work. This avoids multiplication of independent societies, with its attendant inconveniences, and at the same time it allows anyone, whether a Sodalist or not, to take part in Sodality activities.

THE UTILITIES OF OUTSIDE PARTICIPANTS

The general Sodality meeting, besides its devotional side, should always include a business meeting with reports from the various sections. Non-Sodalists may very well be welcomed to this meeting also. Those who are prevented by some persistent obstacle from becoming Sodality members may thus keep track of interesting activities and be benefited by participation in the religious exercises. Non-Catholics, as in the case of the nurses' Sodalities in the hospitals, sometimes appreciate this very much and are permanently and profoundly impressed by what they see and hear at these Sodality meetings, while Catholics who are not yet members of the Sodality find themselves stimulated to apply for membership and to try to rise to the level of Sodality requisites. Thus it seems wise to encourage non-members to attend the meetings so far as the limit of space allows. The Sodalists have first right to consideration, and hence should be assured of place before others are admitted.

It would be very desirable to conduct Sodality affairs in such a capable energetic and interesting way that even those who are not Sodality members would be anxious to be allowed to come to meetings and to partake in some of the activities of the sections or academies. In fact, it would have a very good effect on the Sodalists themselves if outsiders did manifest this desire and were seen at meetings. The same capable management which would attract them would also stimulate the Sodalists to greater efforts, so that the officers of the Sodality who set out deliberately to make the meetings so attractive and its activities so interesting that non-members will be anxious to participate, are at the same time taking the best means

of stimulating their own members to interest and enthusiasm.

THE SOLUTION OF MANY DIFFICULTIES

Reflection will show that this principle of admitting non-members to meetings and activities answers not a few objections and difficulties against Sodality organization. Those who are not sufficiently familiar with Sodality efforts sometimes object that the Sodality is too narrow a circle, that it is exclusive, that it benefits some members of the parish at the expense of others, that it tends to form a class of the more devout, to which the less fervent cannot penetrate. How unfounded are these accusations will appear from what has already been said. Though the Sodality does group together a circle of the more fervent, far from making them exclusive, it seeks to train them and send them off to influence others. Not only are their activities directed to the help of their neighbor in general, but their very meetings, their academies and sections, may open their doors generously to all the world. The Sodalists must indeed, as is fitting and necessary, remain in control and direction of all Sodality activities, but anyone of good will may be welcomed to share in and help their work.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE SODALITY HALL

AS WE write these words a succession of various pictures comes floating up before the eye of memory, a curious and interesting series of recollections of Sodality halls which we have seen. It will be profitable and interesting to say somewhat of the more characteristic of these Sodality headquarters so that our Directors and officers of Sodalities may receive encouragement and suggestions and may emulate the achievements of their bretheren in this and other lands.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD HEADQUARTERS

The Sodality headquarters is, to be sure, of singular importance in keeping up the good spirit of the Sodalists and in providing a material center for both their spiritual and social activities. Sodalities are, of course, always erected in a church or chapel, and so their religious meetings are always provided for. But, as the rules so clearly say in many places, and as the papal documents likewise plainly indicate, the Sodality is to be more than a pious confraternity. The Sodalists are to deal with one another in friendly and charitable sociability and they are to work for their neighbor and the Church with constant zeal, according to the opportunities which Providence gives them.

These latter phases of Sodality life require a local habitation for their exercise, and so the officers of a

well-organized Sodality look about instinctively for a Sodality hall or headquarters. Sometimes this is found in the parish center. Sometimes a few rooms are secured. Best of all, some Sodalities have their own hall, a true parish center, well equipped and managed, where the activities of the Sodality grow green and flourish in congenial surroundings.

THE REQUISITES OF SERVICE

Let us conjure up some of the more notable of these Sodality headquarters which we have visited in the past. Though one Sodality can seldom copy literally from another, still the details of such a work will be suggestive in other places and under other conditions. Some Sodalities only require a few rooms for headquarters. Others really need an extensive building. As in all similar enterprises the first move is to make an accurate survey of the situation, to determine just what is needed in a locality and what can be maintained by the Sodality. Then comes the providing of the headquarters, and, last, but very important, is the maintaining of proper service so that the Sodality hall may be attractive and congenial to the Sodalists.

It is in the process of planning a Sodality hall that it becomes very useful to learn what others have accomplished. Besides, the very recital of successful enterprises elsewhere, tends to stir up ambition in the Sodality officers to do something of the kind themselves. We hope, therefore, that a twofold benefit may come from the following descriptions of successful Sodality centers.

SOME SODALITY HEADQUARTERS IN PARIS

Let us begin with Paris, that extraordinary city where one sees surprising contrasts of sublime de-

votion on the one hand, and active opposition to the Church on the other. Truth to say, when we visited Paris, the active opposition had for the time been beaten down and subdued by the moral grandeur of Catholic, and especially of clerical, self-sacrifice and valor during the war. Still, the enterprises we are about to describe had been carried on through a period of active opposition to the Church.

Professional education is for the most part a monopoly of the French government, and students flock from all the provinces to Paris for the faculties of medicine, law, and letters. Among each group of these students has been organized a Sodality of the Blessed Virgin, each with its own Sodality headquarters, a commodious building which we should call a Sodality hall, equipped and maintained to meet the Sodalists' special needs, and where the Director dwells, always in readiness to help and advise the Sodalists and always leading them forward along the ways of fervent Catholicity and of professional eminence.

FOR MEDICAL STUDENTS

Let us choose the medical students' Sodality and pay a visit to its headquarters. We find them in a large, well-equipped building, on a quiet street, yet near enough to the university lecture rooms to be convenient for the students. As we enter the building we are impressed with the atmosphere of studious silence. Everything is arranged and adapted to the special purpose of a house of study and conference for medical students. Long tables afford place for many readers. Bookcases offer the medical works which these young men require in their classes. There are anatomical specimens, microscopes, in a word, all the paraphernalia of medical study. As you pass by

the doors you perceive rows of students, silent and intent each with his group of books, reading and taking notes.

EXTRAORDINARY PRIVILEGES

These young men have extraordinary advantages. First they are enrolled in a Sodality of the Blessed Virgin and are preserved from the moral dangers which the capital unhappily brings to students. They can leave their lodgings and the noise of the city and its distractions far behind them at any time when they choose, and come here to the Sodality hall to study. Besides, in these quiet rooms, other advantages are constantly offered them. To this *Conference Laennec,* as it is called, come former student-Sodalists, now practitioners of medicine or surgery, or professors in the university, and these give the Sodalists special lectures and instruction. Each week a test examination is held so that the Sodalists may determine whether they are advancing as they should. The Director of the Sodality is constantly giving instructions also in ethics and in religion. For these reasons the Sodality hall of the medical students is a center of preparation for medical eminence; its members carry off the lion's share of honors in the examinations; and they secure the best positions in the hospitals.

We mount the stairs to the Director's office and there find the old and experienced priest who has for years been in charge of this Sodality. In the antechamber, which is like the patient's waiting room of a physician's office, a group of medical Sodalists, young men and women both (the young women students, however, have a headquarters of their own), are waiting to consult the Director. One by one he receives them, surrounded by his books, and gives them expert

advice on medical ethics, on their studies, and upon the religious and devotional side of their life.

THE HEADQUARTERS OF LAW AND LITERATURE

As we leave this hall to visit the near-by Sodality halls of the law students and students of literature respectively, each with its similar equipment, its resident Director, and its atmosphere of study and piety, we reflect how useful it would be to establish such Sodality halls in our country also. We very much need among our Catholic young people, a greater desire of professional eminence, and the definite striving to achieve it. We need leaders in the professions, men who will rise to the summit as speedily as they can. Such Sodality halls, equipped and managed to suit the temper of our American students, would be an admirable means. Indeed, even a parish Sodality may well take a leaf out of the book of these schools of eminence and provide a study room in its Sodality hall.

A similar Sodality hall for medical students exists in Lyons, which is the second center of medical education in France. Its equipment is similar to that of the Paris Sodality, though it aims perhaps less at developing special eminence. It provides a spiritual training and the opportunities for professional study to the Catholic medical students at Lyons.

A SODALITY HALL AT VALENCIA

Let us now hasten in imagination far to the south of Paris and cross the Pyrenees into Spain. There, in the midst of the Spanish peninsula, we shall find at Valencia another Sodality hall well worth visiting. It is the headquarters of the young men's Sodality and was built and equipped especially for their use. Thither every evening repair in numbers the young

men of Valencia, sometimes for spiritual exercises, sometimes for study or debate, sometimes, too, for friendly sociability. It is a rallying place for the young Catholic life of the place.

The building is entered by an ornate door, painted gaily after the fashion of that old city. As one comes in, there opens to the left a large chapel, the seat of the Sodality, where the weekly meetings are held and where special religious functions take place. The rest of the building is given over to social rooms, a library, study halls for the professional students, which somewhat remind one of the medical students' hall in Paris, and several interesting exhibitions.

SODALITY EXHIBITS

Thus, in one series of rooms, the walls are covered with a multitude of beautiful pictures, photographic reproductions of the most celebrated Madonnas of various countries. In other rooms the Sodalists have reproduced some characteristic scenes from the life of the peasants of their district. One celebrated exhibit shows a life-size effigy of a countryman in cap and slippers, smoking his pipe at his cottage fireside. These exhibits were prepared by the Sodalists themselves and offer an interesting suggestion for our own Sodality halls where groups of Sodalists might take charge of forming a similar collection of Madonnas or of installing exhibits illustrating the Catholic life and history of the place. The evening on which we visited the Sodality hall of Valencia there was a pleasant buzz of conversation all about. The Sodalists and their friends seemed to feel very much at home in the hall, and the Director encourages this atmosphere of informal friendliness.

In one room indeed a party of debaters were gravely discussing some topic, and in other apartments the

professional students were busy with their books; the rest of the building was a true social center and seemed well patronized by the young men of Valencia.

A SODALITY HALL AT MADRID

Striking a little to the north, to the Spanish capital, we may visit another Sodality hall, this time for the young men of Madrid. Here, too, we find a well-equipped building, with a dignified conference room where the study circles and debating clubs hold forth, with recreation rooms where the young people amuse themselves with games and talk, and with classrooms in the lower part of the building devoted to the very needed and fruitful activity of holding classes for the street gamins of Madrid who are brought in by the Sodalists, taught their religion, befriended, and kept under good influences.

THE SODALITY CENTERS OF BARCELONA

There are other Sodality halls in Spain, but we must pay one more visit, this time to the centers at Barcelona. The famous Sodality of the Immaculate Conception and of St. Aloysius meets in its chapel near the Jesuit Church. But the chief building owned by the Sodality is, significantly enough, a great social center for workingmen called *Il Centro di San Petro Claver*. As we come in sight of this splendid building, we are impressed by the architecture and the extent of the structure. Within, there are social rooms where clubs for workingmen meet and where the Sodalists act as hosts. Large classrooms, too, accommodate the catechetical classes, taught by the Sodalists and made up of the children of workingmen. In one room, a moving picture, evidently of American origin, is being displayed to the great delight of a throng of children. There is a coöperative workingmen's bank on the

premises. There are rooms where social study clubs for workingmen are being conducted. In a word, the whole of the splendid building is given over to the use of the workingmen and their families, and though Sodalists are everywhere, they act as hosts, teachers, entertainers, and thus use their leisure hours in working for the benefit of others.

The Director of the Sodality now takes us to several other smaller centers of the same kind in Barcelona, likewise owned and conducted by the Sodalists, each one the scene of a busy life, classes in catechism in progress, groups of young workingmen holding meetings and all under the supervision of volunteers from the Sodality. In fact, all the members of this Sodality to the number of nearly 1800 young men from the ages of 18 to 30, are required to be active, each in some department of Sodality work. They are the flower of the Catholic youth of Barcelona.

A SODALITY HEADQUARTERS AT DÜSSELDORF

We shall now make our way to the northwest and visit one or two centers of Sodality activity in Germany. At Düsseldorf we find the headquarters of a union of Sodalities whose members number some 300,000. Of these about 200,000 are in true Sodalities, scattered throughout the northern part of Germany, while the other 100,000, so the Director tells us, are members of societies which are Sodalities in everything but name. These young workingmen have their central bureau at Düsseldorf. It is not a Sodality hall in the proper sense, but rather a center of information, suggestions, and coördination. A great variety of Sodality supplies are likewise kept on hand to be sent out to the various units. There are books, athletic equipment, and various other supplies for the convenience of the Sodalities. Something of this kind

might be established here when the Sodality unions become numerous enough to justify a national association.

A CENTER AT BOCHUM

Traveling to Bochum, in the Ruhr, we find another center, this time of a group of young women's Sodalities which count a membership of 600,000, scattered throughout the industrial districts of northern Germany. Their headquarters also are not so much a Sodality hall as a central bureau, from which information, suggestions, and literature are sent to the Sodalities, and where statistics are kept and coöperation promoted among the various groups of Sodalists.

THE BORROMÆUM AT BASEL

There is a Sodality in Switzerland, in the town of Basel near the German frontier, which boasts a Sodality hall quite famous in the town. It is called the Borromæum, after St. Charles Borromæo, and is a center of sociability and friendliness for the young men of Basel. We remember, vividly, arriving in the city to visit this Sodality headquarters on a day when all the populace were in the midst of a local carnival. Masked figures in costume were everywhere on the street and we made our way to the Borromæum through festive crowds costumed in the wildest mood of holiday merrymaking. The Borromæum itself contains rooms for athletic exercises and for social gatherings. The Sodality is very well organized with sections for various sorts of work. Upon the testimony of the Director, the existence of this Sodality hall has been a powerful means to keep the Sodalists away from evil amusements and to group them together in a solid organization with headquarters of their own and their own facilities for sociability and physical exercise.

THE SODALITY HALL AT LE PUY

Memory now shifts the scene to the old town of Le Puy, in France, where, mounted on an elevation near the ancient Cathedral, a colossal statue of the Blessed Virgin and the Divine Infant, cast from the cannons captured in old-time wars, dominates the entire city. Very appropriately, almost in the shadow of the statue we came upon a Sodality hall where a group of young ladies conduct social activities in honor of the Blessed Virgin. The zealous old Director of the Sodality showed his little treasures with pride. There was a conference hall where entertainments could be held. There were rooms for reading or study. In a word, the central activities of the Sodality were well taken care of.

THE INFLUENCE OF A HEADQUARTERS

It was interesting to hear the Director tell of the influence of the Sodality headquarters on his members. While the Sodality had remained merely a pious confraternity, the Sodalists would not come to meetings, they took no interest; but as soon as the active work proper to the Sodality was begun, new enthusiasm arose. When Sodality headquarters were provided, everyone became more loyal, and success smiled on the Sodality. As we listened, we wondered how like is human nature all the world over. Even this quiet old-world town of mediæval France, where St. Louis paid his homage to the Queen of Heaven, the Sodalists needed active work and a Sodality headquarters to enlist their enthusiastic allegiance.

In our own country are to be found many Sodality headquarters, some of them simple and even inadequate, others more elaborate and well-equipped. It should be the ambition of the officers and members

of every well-established Sodality either alone or in coöperation with other Sodalities to provide some worthy center for their members. If in the old cities of Europe, sometimes under most disadvantageous conditions and with scanty resources, the Sodalists have been able to erect Sodality halls such as we have described, what may we not expect of our Sodalities in this land of singular opportunity, this nation, the richest in resources of all the nations of the earth and dedicated to the honor of the Blessed Virgin under the mystery of her Immaculate Conception!

CHAPTER XL

THE EFFICACY OF THE SODALITY

"THEY fall more rarely, they rise more quickly and easily." These words of St. Bernard were uttered, as we remarked before, of those who enter religion, but they very aptly apply to those who join the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin. It should be a consolation both to the members of the Sodality and those who are their officers and Directors to ponder on these words, which contain so profound a truth. The protection which religious life gives to those who embrace it, whereby they fall more rarely and rise more easily, comes in part from the special graces which God pours down on them, and in part from the careful organization and personal safeguards which are thrown about them from the moment that they enter the religious novitiate.

To a less degree, of course, but in a similar way, the Sodality offers its members added graces and protection. It stands to reason and is proved by experience that anyone who joins the Sodality and thus shows special honor to the Mother of God will receive through her intercession particular help and graces to avoid sin, to fall more rarely, and to rise more swiftly. Those who have grown old in Sodality work can bear witness to this.

THE SAFEGUARD OF A REGULAR LIFE

But the Sodality resembles Religious Congregations in the other characteristic also, that it throws about

its members the safeguards of a regular life. We speak now, of course, of those Sodalities which really deserve the name "Sodality" and which at least make an effort to carry out the suggestions of the rules in regard to Sodality life. They have regular meetings which are well attended and at which definite instructions are read or given, to direct and encourage the members along the threefold way of Sodality effort for personal goodness, the help of the neighbor and the defense of the Church. They have organized sections, some of which encourage the members to work for personal piety, while others systematize and direct their efforts for the help of their neighbor in spiritual and corporal works of mercy, and others, still, marshall the forces of the Sodalists to fight for the defense and spread of the Faith of Christ. Such well-organized Sodalities have an instructor of candidates who teaches the members before their admission the general duties and privileges of Sodalists and the local customs and practices.

NOT MERE PIOUS CONFRATERNITIES

Those who are to become Sodalists, are required, as candidates, for at least several months, to show their determination to be faithful to the duties as Sodalists. Once admitted to the Sodality, they are expected to remain active and faithful members and they are helped by the encouragement of their officers and Director and by the good example of their fellow Sodalists. In a word, such Sodalities are not merely pious confraternities, satisfied with the conducting of a meeting once a week and the holding of monthly communion, but they are what the rule requires, active religious societies which strive, by means of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, to make their members exemplary Catholics in the full sense of that most

honorable word, sincerely bent on achieving personal goodness and earnestly desirous, in honor of the Blessed Virgin, to help and save their neighbor and to defend and spread the Church.

THE PERIOD OF PROBATION

Membership in such a society is a real help and safeguard, a positive means to fall less frequently and to rise more swiftly. In fact, its influence on its members is comparable, at least remotely, with the influence exercised by the Religious Order or Congregation. In the Religious Order there must always be a novitiate, during which the applicant for admission is at once instructed in his religious duties and tested as to his fitness and determination to observe them. This novitiate is to him a source of strength during all his religious life. It is a period of proving, when he has to show great fidelity to the rules and vows even before he has solemnly undertaken to observe them. The analagous period of instruction and probation for the Sodalist is the time of his candidacy, when he has applied for admission to the Sodality, but is being tested for at least two or three months, preliminary to his acceptance. During that time he should receive from the instructor of candidates lessons on the rules and traditions of the Sodality and should be required to show great fidelity in attending the meetings and in taking part in all the Sodality activities so as to train himself in fervor and to demonstrate to the officers and members of the Sodality his sincere intention of becoming a good Sodalist.

THE ACT OF CONSECRATION

In Religious Orders, at the conclusion of the novitiate, the applicants for membership who have shown themselves fit subjects and have displayed the

requisite fidelity and fervor are allowed to take the vows of religion; the vows, that is, of poverty, chastity and obedience, by which they bind themselves to follow the counsels of perfection given by Christ and associate themselves most closely to His Divine Person. No vows, of course, are taken by Sodalists as such. But the solemn act of consecration by which they offer themselves for a lifelong service and imitation of Christ and His Blessed Mother, and the action of the Sodality, by which they are formally accepted as members, offer a form of personal consecration which is, though distantly of course, comparable to the personal consecration of the religious vows. Without being obliged to follow the counsels of perfection as Religious are, the Sodalist is still called upon to practice, according to his state, the most excellent and faithful chastity, whether in the married or single life, patterning his conduct in this respect after the most lofty model; that is, after the example of Christ Himself as imitated most perfectly by His virginal Mother.

So, too, the Sodalist is called on to exercise obedience from a supernatural motive to the Directors and officers of the Sodality in all that concerns the Sodality life; and in this also he is at least an humble imitator of the Religious, whose entire career is directed and guided by Divine Providence through the mouth of his lawfully appointed superiors. Finally, the Religious Order provides for its members the guidance of definite rules which express its particular spirit and direct its activities.

THE ANALOGY OF THE RULES

In this also the Sodality offers an analogy. It, too, has its set of rules, wisely and carefully drawn up and approved by the authority of the Church, which

offer its members a plan of life eminently calculated to lead them to sanctity and to a holy efficiency in their work for their neighbor and the Church. In all these ways the Sodalists, somewhat like Religious, are safeguarded against falling if only they will be true to the guidance and inspiration of their Sodality rules and are helped to rise more swiftly when through human weakness they have unfortunately fallen into some fault. The more the Sodality approaches to the ideal of its organization, the more it observes its rules and carries out the methods of organization which are traditional, the more truly effective it is in thus safeguarding its members. But the same may be said of the Religious Order or Congregation, which depends for its efficacy on the fidelity with which it keeps the spirit of its rules and which may easily become lax and ineffective if it departs from its allotted sphere and practices.

THE HOLINESS OF THE LAITY

Of course, the Religious Order is incomparably more effective than the Sodality because of its binding vows, the entire and lifelong consecration of its members and the solemn sanctions of the Church. We merely mean by this comparison to call attention in a vivid way to the possibilities which Sodality membership offers even to the layman, and to emphasize the need of the more and more perfect organization of Sodalities to give their members more and more of this spiritual strength and support. The fact is, that Catholics in the world really need nowadays some such definite help and incentive to goodness. It is a serious error to think that unless a Catholic man or woman enters the priesthood or religious life he or she has definitely given up all aspirations to sanctity,

There is an unconscious disposition in the minds of some to judge in this manner and to think that very ordinary piety is all that can be expected of the laity. Were then the words of Our Lord: "Be ye perfect as also your Father in Heaven is perfect," addressed only to priests and Religious?

THE LAY FOLKS' HELPS TO HOLINESS

The truth is, that everyone, without exception, is called to Christian perfection. Those who enter the religious life put themselves in a most favorable position for acquiring this perfection and are surrounded with many special helps and safeguards. They bind themselves by solemn vows to strive after perfection and to practice the counsels of perfection. They may therefore be regarded as comparatively secure. But the Catholic men and women who remain in the world ought to be the object of our special solicitude. We ought to organize for them well-regulated active Sodalities, or rather, to say more truly, we should help and encourage them to organize these for themselves and should, by our constant help and direction, aid them to persevere in this organization. They have even more need of such extraordinary help than have Religious. One who enters religion binds himself to a life of organized fervor, but those who live in the world will want such safeguards unless we provide them through a means like the Sodality.

A NEEDED REALIZATION

It is curious that we do not more vividly realize that the same efficacy of organization which has brought forth such great fruits to Religious Communities, will also produce proportionate good results if applied to the needs of the laity. The world is cov-

ered with the marvelous harvests of the organization of religious life. Anyone who reads the history of the early Church can trace the development of this organization. At first there was no such thing as a Religious Community in Christendom. The consecrated virgins who had vowed their virginity to God lived in their own homes and exercised works of mercy and piety as individuals. The clergy likewise dwelt for the most part in their own families. It was only when experience had shown how difficult it was to keep up the fervor of the religious life in isolated individuals that the custom grew of assembling in communities. Even the solitaries of the desert came together under the guidance of one superior. Law-givers arose to make rules for the religious life. The consecrated virgins were grouped into convents and given rules. In other words, the organization of the religious life arose and was perfected in the slow course of years until it became the marvelous system which we know today. A similar tendency for the organization of the laity may also be observed in the history of the Church, which reached a very comely flower in the Guilds' system of Catholic times. You may still see in old countries of Europe the great and splendid Guild houses, which were the centers of organizations not unlike the Sodalities of our time, excellently regulated to promote both the spiritual and temporal interests of their members.

In our day it is difficult to conceive how the Church can maintain itself in modern conditions without the organized help of Religious, men and women. Certainly, our whole system of schools and hospitals would be impossible as we have them today without the work of well-organized religious Sisterhoods.

THE WANT OF LAY ORGANIZATION

Is it not fair to think that the very exigencies of modern times will oblige us to some similar organizations for the laity? Many persons turn a longing eye toward the Guilds of the Middle Ages and indeed we may learn much from those great precursors of the Sodality. But in the Sodality itself we have a society capable of meeting in an extraordinary way the requirements of lay organization. It is a religious society with a long record of achievement, a proven efficacy of organization, a persistent life, even where it has been neglected, the full approval of the ecclesiastical superiors, a most flexible adaptability of organization and universal membership, a wealth of indulgences and privileges, and a variety of existing centers which embrace both sexes, all ages, every condition of life, the clergy, as well as the laity, the learned and powerful as well as the simple, and the young. As the writer on Sodalities in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* declares, these Sodalities of the Blessed Virgin affiliated to the Head Sodality at Rome are the most effective means of making lay apostles and loyal Catholics. "It cannot indeed, be denied," he says, "that these Sodalities are by their spirit and entire organization better equipped than other confraternities to make their members not only loyal Catholics but also true lay apostles, for the salvation and blessing of all around them. . . . While all other confraternities and Sodalities have as their chief end a single pious devotion or exercise, a single work of love of God or of one's neighbor, the peculiar aim of the Sodalities of the Blessed Virgin Mary is, by means of the true veneration of the Blessed Virgin, to build up and renew the whole inner man in order to

render him capable of and zealous for all works of spiritual love and charity."

THE RIGHT DIRECTION OF EFFORT

It is true that no small effort is required to make the Sodality everything it should be, but if this effort is directed toward training the officers and setting the organization of the Sodality on a firm footing, the building of so capable a machine may indeed be laborious, but the machine itself will run on with occasional tending and will produce results obtainable in no other way. In the event that no priest is at hand who can give sufficient time to set a Sodality going effectively, members of the laity may be found who will study up Sodality rules, traditions and methods and will give their energy and zeal toward making it a success.

Certainly, if we can rely on past experience, few means exist so effective as the Sodality for organizing the laity to achieve results of personal sanctification and the active help of the neighbor analagous to those which the Religious Orders and Congregations have, through their effective organization, brought to their members. The sooner we realize the potential efficacy of the Sodality, the sooner we shall meet the needs of the Church of this day and the more we shall hasten the long-expected era when the lay apostolate shall not only be spoken of in theory and fervently commended but shall actually be realized by efficient organization.

CHAPTER XLI

THE SODALITY AS A SAFEGUARD OF GOODNESS

SPIRITUAL influences are very difficult to estimate. We can measure and weigh material things, but in affairs of the spirit we can often only infer. Thus, the full power and efficacy of the Sodality in preserving the innocence of its members and encouraging them to personal goodness is in great part a matter of conjecture. Yet, no one that has had much experience in parishes or schools but will admit how large a part the Sodalities can play in helping to preserve innocence and goodness in their members. Indeed, it is not without reason that the words of St. Bernard about the religious life are so often quoted in regard to Sodalities of the Blessed Virgin. Those who become members of them, like those who enter religion, though not, of course, in the same degree, "live more purely, they fall more rarely, they rise more quickly and easily, they are helped more abundantly, they live more quietly and peacefully and they die more happily and securely."

THE SODALITY A GUARD OF PURITY

How many young men and women owe to the Sodality the purity of their lives, their preservation from grievous sin, the fostering of devotion in their hearts, their enlisting in various good works. The devotion which is their characteristic mark, devotion, that is,

to the Blessed Mother of God, has in itself a prophylactic power beyond all computing. The very name of Mary drives away the demons of impurity and confirms the soul in innocence and goodness. This all the Sodalities have in common, that they practice devotion to the Virgin Mary. It is quite true that some of them do this more fervently and in an organized and beautiful way, and others only listlessly and, with little definite purpose. It is the fervent and well-organized Sodalities, of course, which do the most for their members in the way of keeping them good and innocent. But every society that ever was organized in the name of Mary has had some good result in making its members holy. The more the Sodality flourishes, the greater is its efficacy for good; but it is worth while keeping up a Sodality, even partially and under great difficulties, for the sake of the help it gives its members to live purely and well.

THE PERSONIFICATION OF VIRGINITY

In paying devotion to the Blessed Virgin we recall her marvelous personality and put ourselves under her influence who is at once the most pure of virgins and the most exalted of mothers. The holiness and innocence of the Blessed Virgin are so great that they have in themselves a compelling power to preserve the soul from evil. She has imitated so perfectly her Divine Son, who is the source and fountain of goodness that the power of her example almost compels us, if we truly love her, to endeavor to follow her in her imitation of Him. Being a mere creature like ourselves she has so perfectly fulfilled the ideal of human goodness that she has become a personified ideal. What is ideally lovely and perfect always attracts our human nature through its nobler impulses. When this glorious ideal of virginity is personified in

Mary, it becomes irresistible to our souls. We are drawn to love her and follow her because she is so radiantly pure and so warmly human. She exercises over us at the same time the two mightiest influences for purity which human nature can exert, that of a most innocent virgin and of a most tender and holy mother.

Besides this, she has received from God a special power over souls, unique in its kind and degree, the special gift of her Son by which she can counteract the evil tendencies of our nature and help us powerfully to be innocent and pure. This makes the Blessed Virgin so singular a patron and helper of innocence that she stands quite alone and second only to her Divine Son as the helper of pure souls.

THE FORCE OF MARY'S EXAMPLE

We can in part analyze and understand this wonderful power of the Virgin Mother to keep her clients pure. As we have said, the example of a Virginity at once of body and of soul, so perfect and so heavenly, draws us irresistibly to be pure. The force of example is proverbial. When this example becomes perfect so that the ideal is really translated into terms of human nature, then its power is beyond all words. Now, the very thought of Mary brings before us at once the thought of an ideal purity. This begets in the soul a desire to imitate her and to be perfectly pure. For this reason the Sodalist who devotes himself to the Blessed Virgin and solemnly and publicly consecrates himself to her service comes necessarily under her powerful influence toward innocence and purity. Whenever he thinks of his membership in the Sodality, he thinks by inference of his consecration to Mary, with all it implies of effort for personal good-

ness. How many millions of Sodalists can witness from their personal experience how much this has helped them to remain innocent or quickly to recover their innocence when they had the misfortune to fall.

A MOTHER'S INFLUENCE FOR PURITY

From another aspect the motherhood of the Blessed Virgin, divinely decreed and in itself the motherhood of God, is also a source of her great power to keep souls pure. About the memory of a mother cluster all the purest recollections and instincts of the child. So long as anyone remains faithful to the veneration in which he holds his mother, he will look upon all womanhood as something sacred and pure. So also, a girl who has reverence and devotion to her mother, will forever desire to keep the innocence of her soul unspotted. Now, all members of the Sodality, whether men or women, have chosen the Blessed Virgin in a special and public way not only as their Queen and Advocate, but also as their Mother. The very thought of this consecration will help them to be pure.

THE MODEL OF RELIGIOUS PURITY

St. Bernard's words, quoted above, suggest a comparison between the influence of the Blessed Virgin on those who enter the religious life and upon those who enter the Sodality. It is well known that the Virgin Mother is the chief patroness of all who enter Religious Orders and Congregations. Not one but thanks her in particular for the immense gift and special graces of a religious vocation. Not one but prays to her to obtain the grace of perseverance and recognizes that the graces of the religious life, like all others which come to us from God, are given through the hands of Mary. We have several times

vividly recalled the ancient witness of a painting of the second century in the catacombs of Rome, which bears testimony to the fact that even in those days of the primitive Church the Blessed Virgin was, par-excellence, the patron of Religious. Not long since, by the light of flickering tapers, we were guided through those sacred refuges of the early Christians, and our learned *cicerone* paused to point out this particular mural painting. It portrays a bishop just giving the veil to a consecrated virgin; and while with one hand he puts upon her head the garment which marks the dedication of her virginity to God, with his other hand he points to the Virgin Mary, who is depicted at a little distance, seated and holding her Divine Child. The significance of the painting is very evident. Mary is to serve as the inspiration and model of a life of religious consecration and of virginity vowed to God. In those days of the early Church, as in our present time, she was the Mother and Exemplar of Christian virgins.

Now, the Sodality reproduces to a certain degree, for persons in the world, the consecration of the religious life to Mary. True, Sodalists take no vows and the Sodality is in no literal sense a Religious Order, but it does imitate the characteristic devotion of Religious by likewise consecrating its members in a solemn manner to the Mother of God. As her influence helps powerfully to enable Religious to live angelic lives of purity and innocence, so also her example helps the Sodalists to keep themselves unspotted from the threefold concupiscence of which St. John speaks, the concupiscence of the eyes, the concupiscence of the flesh, and the pride of life, or in other words, the love of pleasure, avarice, and pride, which ruin so many souls.

THE FOSTERER OF VOCATIONS

There is another close bond between the Sodality and the religious life in this, that the Sodality has so powerful an influence in fostering religious vocations. How very many of those who at present are serving as volunteers in the army of Christ, whether as priests or as Sisters or as Brothers, at home and in missionary lands, owe the courage of self-renunciation and the fervor of sacrifice which nerved them to leave all things and follow Christ, to the influence of the Blessed Virgin, exercised by reason of their membership in the Sodality.

They were in their childhood faithful members of the Sodality having entered it most probably while at school, attracted by the devotion it paid to the Blessed Virgin. At each meeting of the Sodality, whatever else they experienced, the fervor of their devotion grew. They were confirmed in their steadfast purpose to be true children of the Mother of God throughout their lives. The influence of this devotion wrought many insensible changes in their hearts. They grew to love purity, to appreciate self-sacrifice, to value supernatural things after the example of her who is the model of purity, the personification of self-sacrifice and the very symbol of the supernatural. Thus, little by little, the germ of vocation grew and blossomed and bore fruit in the congenial sunshine of devotion to Mary. Membership in the Sodality was to them the vestibule and approach to membership in a Religious Community. Through their fidelity to Sodality ideals and their faithfulness to Sodality exercises they were strengthened more than they knew; so that when the time came for them freely to renounce all things and to follow Christ, they were led to the threshold of the

religious novitiate by the guiding hand of their virginal Patroness and Mother.

This is true to some extent even where the Sodalities in the schools and parishes do little more than promote devotional exercises in honor of the Blessed Virgin. Even under such circumstances the immense power of this blessed devotion makes itself singularly felt upon souls. But where, in addition, the Sodality is truly well organized and active in good works, it has a still greater efficacy to train its members in self-sacrifice and it is much more fruitful in fostering religious vocations.

FOR THOSE WHO REMAIN IN THE WORLD

But for those whom Providence does not lead to embrace the religious life, there is still the great motive for perseverance in the Sodality that it will safeguard them through all their earthly career and help them to walk in innocence through the multiplied dangers and temptations of life. When a Sodalist enters religion or the priesthood he remains, it is true, a member of the Sodality, for, "once a Sodalist, always a Sodalist." Still, the exercises and safeguards of religious life take the place of the meetings and activities of the Sodality. But those who continue in the world and have to work out their salvation in the midst of its atmosphere, unfavorable to goodness, should cleave mightily to the supports and helps which the Sodality offers them to persevere in goodness.

AN EFFECTIVE MEANS OF ORGANIZATION

This is especially true when the Sodality is thoroughly organized and full of activities, because then it offers its members all the strength of concerted effort and association to encourage them in the ways

of personal piety and active zeal. It is singular that those who are responsible for the spiritual direction of men and women who live in the world do not oftener realize the need of effective organization to keep them devout and active for the interests of the Church. A great deal is said about the need of a pious laity and the absolute necessity of lay apostles if the work of the Church is to be accomplished; but there is a curious slowness on the part of many to grasp the concrete fact that under present conditions this personal piety and active effort of lay folks is almost impossible without adequate organization.

Some persons who consider themselves extremely practical are really visionary in this matter. They speak about social work, and they do nothing to train social workers. They declaim about the need of more personal piety among Catholics and more zeal in defense of the Church, and they seem blind to the consideration that such zeal and activity will never come without adequate means to promote them. In the Sodality such a means is ready at hand and it is constantly manifesting its beneficent power both to safeguard the goodness of its members and to stir them to activity, and this very often despite the fact that the Sodality is poorly organized and inadequately directed. How desirable it is that existing Sodalities should be raised to a higher degree of efficiency and fervor and that new ones should be established so as to preserve the pious faithful and innocence and fervor while at the same time it fosters much-needed vocations to the priesthood and the religious life and trains those who are to remain in the world for the battles and triumphs of the lay apostolate.

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